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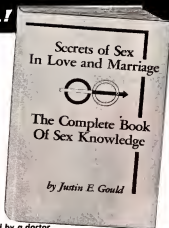
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WORLD WIDE ADVENTURE

ACTION FOR MEN • DARING STORIES

Volume 1

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Robert A. W. Lowndes, *Editor*

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INTRODUCTION

WITH THIS SECOND issue of WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE, we continue our policy of offering you action stories of many varieties, taking places in different times and places the world over.

A little more than two hundred and fifty years ago, the list of crimes and misdemeanors for which a person would be put to death most cruelly was astonishing. And under these circumstances, the alternative of transporting a convict to a penal colony in Australia was considered merciful. Anthony Rud tells of the convict ship which started out with 683 men chained below decks, to arrive at Botany Bay with 485 surviving. And one of them solved the problem that was facing the colonists—a problem which would have destroyed civilization in that land had it not been solved. You'll learn what it was when you read about the fascinating exploits of *The Red Scorpion*.

Phone calls start at ten cents these days, but corruption in local government which works hand in glove with the sort of greedy enterprise that risks lives is hardly outdated. James H.S. Moynahan puts it bluntly: the man who dares to stand up against injustice that venial office-holders are trying to whitewash has little more than *A Nickel's Worth of Life*.

You've heard of H.G. Wells as an author of science fiction, of fantasy, and social and economic writings, as well as history, but he's less well known for straight adventure stories. Here is one of them, wherein two none-too-savory adventures encounter *The Treasure In The Forest*.

It takes more than muscle to survive some adventures and solve some riddles that direct force doesn't seem to crack. And while we think of the lawmen of the Old West as gunswift and quick with fists, Ralph L. Cunningham shows that there were more than a few who sometimes taught the youngsters the sort of thing that Billy Merkel impressed on the lawmen of Cactus City—which is why Billy's was *The Star That Stuck*.

British rule in India had its relatively placid periods, but always beneath the surface was the stirring of mutiny and revolt. And even a man like the narrator of this story, as Rudyard Kipling shows, might find himself caught up in the intrigue that ran beneath the surface, and plunged into an adventure of the sort that the fighting men never encountered *On The City Wall*.

As Theodore Roscoe tells us, he is not presenting a railroad story. It's the story of an expatriate engineer and the hilarious and bizarre chain of incidents that led to a fantastic ride with a corpse on the *Graveyard Limited*.

We hope you enjoy this issue's offerings, and that you will let us know which stories you liked best; and particularly we want to know where you feel that we have slipped and given you stories you did not care for. It's wonderful to receive communications like the postcard which was just turned over to me: "I received issue No. 1 of WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE and I like it very much . . ." but it helps even more when you spell out the details. RAWL

THE RED SCORPION

by ANTHONY M. RUD





TIME: 1813

PLACE: Botany Bay,

Prison Colony, Australia

Unless a way into the interior of this great unknown land could be found, the British colony in Australia was doomed to starvation, for the land could not support even the prisoners, let alone the colonists. And despite the generous offers of a free pardon and reward to any convict who found the way, none had succeeded. Then the convict ship brought a red-headed young man with a fiery will to sting his captors.

"JOHN MacARTHUR HAS lost eighty-one fine wool sheep from starvation this blasted month. There is not enough flesh on all the sheep still living to give all of our thirty thousand souls one mouthful apiece. In other supplies, there cannot be more than two weeks' supply even if we let the convicts starve!"

General Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales, following the unfortunate Captain William Bligh of the *Bounty*, closed his browed right fist. He rarely raised his voice, though he was a man of strength. The work of undoing Bligh's mismanagement, and building a colony back of Fort Jackson and Botany Bay, had taken three harsh years. Now drought, and the failure of the food ships from England, made it seem that famine and horror were to be his only reward.

Lord Bathurst of England shifted uncomfortably and frowned. He had been a visitor at Sydney four months longer now than he had expected to stay. The great sheep station he had intended to establish with John MacArthur was impossible—unless some way could be found through the impassable barrier of the Blue Mountains to the interior. So far, all attempts to cross the mountains had failed.

"There are two ships from England overdue," he said, shaking his white-powdered periwig. "One of them . . ."

"Three are overdue, my lord," said Macquarie grimly. "The *Balmoral Castle*, with six hundred convicts in her hold, has been expected this fortnight. If she arrives first . . ."

His mouth set in a harsh line, but the blue eyes were misery-filled. The utter impossibility of making this strip of infertile land, fifty miles at greatest width, sustain a convict colony of twenty-eight thousand exiles, had been proved to him. And each year, England sent out food ships laden with the minimum—the absolute minimum—in rations for all.

Then one of four such ships failed to reach Australia. . . . Lord Raley, Charles Butterworth and two others of the council spoke indignantly concerning England's responsibilities.

But all such talk was futile. Lord Bathurst rose to his feet. "Gentlemen," he said impressively, "I believe in the great sea which lies in the interior of this continent. It must be similar to our Mediterranean. The fact that the Nepean River and those other small rivers

cutting through bottomless gorges in the mountains seem to flow uphill strikes me as bosh."

"Ah, but that is proved!" sputtered Butterworth, his pince-nez falling from his broad, fat nose. "The great engineer, Fitzgerald . . ."

"Was mistaken. That is all!" Bathurst finished biting. "Water seeks its own level, always." He glared at them all, from the full height of his five feet four inches.

"But they all flow *away* from the ocean!" Butterworth contended feebly.

Bathurst, full of a new idea, did not answer this, which of course was demonstratable truth. "I believe, gentlemen," he said, "that a way over or through the mountains *can* be found! Yes, in spite of those fifteen-hundred-foot gorges and blank walls or rock, and in spite of the rapids and falls of the rivers!"

"So many have tried," sighed Loren Raley, a white-haired, pink-faced old man who had hoped to be Bligh's successor as governor—and who had vegetated in Sydney when his hopes exploded in his face.

"Let more try!" snapped the diminutive lord. "I am giving up my plans and going back to England—when I can. But I shall endeavor to leave my name as a true friend of Australia, not just as one who came, saw, and was conquered. I shall . . ."

Here ensued a strange interruption. From the smoke-cured rafters overhead, something heavy, segmented and armored fell to the eucalyptus boards of the governor's table with a rattling crash.

ALL THE MEN arose swiftly, backing away.. It was a huge red scorpion with a forward-curved tail, and claws as big as those of a crayfish, opening and closing in anger. It was the only deadly creature thus far known in the whole of Australia.

Raley fumbled out the big pistol he wore; but Macquerie motioned him to put it away. Taking up a long-bladed paper-knife, the governor leaned forward. The thin blade whizzed sideways through the air. There was a *click*—and the scorpion was still there, waving its tail as though nothing had happened. But the end segment, containing the deadly sting, had been separated from its body!

Saying nothing, Macquerie picked up the now harmless crea-

ture, as one might pinch the back of a crayfish, and tossed it out of the low window to the grass in the yards.

"Its claws will suffice, so it will not starve," he said laconically. "Better off than we. Ah, yes, my lôrd, you were saying? "

Bathurst shook his powdered head. "I am glad this is not a superstitious age," he said dryly. "Our forefathers would have thought that an omen of disaster and death. We moderns have learned that omens and witchcraft, all of the black arts, exist only when someone believes in them."

This was entirely too modern for some of the council, who exchanged alarmed and doubtful looks; but no one spoke.

"So the crux of my proposal is simply this: I shall leave with the governor a sum of five thousand English pounds. This is to be given unconditionally to the man or men who succeed in discovering a way across or through the Blue Mountains, to the interior of Australia! "

The sharp intake of breath from all of the council could be felt in the ensuing seconds of silence. Money being worth what it was in 1813, this was a fortune. Many of the councilmen began to frown and ponder ways by which they themselves might win this great wealth.

But Lachlan Macquarie was on his feet, something like a vision reflected in his blue eyes. He thanked Bathurst for all of Australia, and then added briefly an inspiration which had just come to him.

"I shall add to my lord Bathurst's munificent offer," he said, "any five square miles of Australia lying beyond the mountains, to the prize-winner and his heirs forever. Also," and here and there councilmen noted his dour look, "I shall ask each month, from now on, for a volunteer explorer *from among our convicts!* Each will be outfitted and loosed in the foothills of the mountains. If any wins through, and returns to show the way, he will receive full pardon as an English subject, in addition to the two grand prizes mentioned!"

There were open murmurs of protest at this; already Lachlan Macquarie had made a name for mercy toward convict exiles, and the ordinary settlers did not approve. The governor, receiving a man from a prison ship, sentenced to two years in chains and

banishment forever, struck off one year of the sentence when the prison ship took six months or more to reach Australia.

He argued hardheadedly that six months in the hold of a prison ship meant enough punishment for any crime, even murder or treason. And so the factions which had benefited from the highhanded measures of Bligh and his autocratic predecessors constantly were complaining to the king of Macquarie's methods.

"Gentlemen," broke in the governor sharply, "do you realize we are starving? Do you know that there are scores of intrepid men sent here for political reasons only—men who would charge the jaws of hell itself for a chance at liberty? Let us say no more. I shall hope one of you, or another of our settlers, may win. But win we shall and must! The mountains strangle . . ."

The door swung slowly open, and there stood a retired petty officer of the British Navy, a brass spyglass under his arm. His bronzed face had grayed in curious fashion.

"Yes, Littleton?" asked Macquarie with impatience.

"A ship!" croaked the oldster. "A ship!"

Excitement brought them all to their feet instantly. A ship meant food for all, or . . .

"And by her black tops'ls, sir-r, it would be the *Balmoral Castle*, bearing us six hundred more of them convicts, sir-r!"

2

OF THE six hundred and eighty-three convicts sent from Yarmouth on the *Balmoral Castle*, four hundred and eighty-nine arrived at Botany Bay. Nearly two hundred died and were tossed overboard during the prison ship's stormy seven months of passage.

The living remainder were scarecrows, caricatures, maniacs, sullen imbeciles—almost anything but the rebellious, crafty, or anti-social creatures they had been in England. Unshaved, unshorn, most of them wearing the filthy rags which had been their only clothes for more than half a year, all of them with sores from their shackles, many with horrible chronic diseases that the worst of them had brought along, this belching forth of human prisoners was a sorrier spectacle than if they had come at Gabriel's trumpet from the relatively clean privacy of their own graves.

Many, of course, had deserved punishment. Almost as many, though, were victims of the political and social upheaval in England, due to Napoleon's victories on the Continent, and England's truculent hesitations. In those uneasy days it was high treason to fight over even a strictly private matter.

The slow, staggering crawl of these half-dead men, still chained together as they came to the shore to which they had looked forward as a blessed end of the worst of their trials, was the more pitiable now—for the shore guards who took them in charge took no pains to conceal the fact that all the newcomers were bitterly unwelcome.

Buffets and curses were given for nothing, until Lachlan Macquarie observed one such incident. Mouth set in sternness, he stepped forward, halting the line. He gave brief orders, and the offending guard, to his horrified astonishment, found himself in the shackles and place of the man he had struck!

This lasted only until they reached the prison, half a mile distant. But there were no more uncalled-for brutalities in public.

The dandified but genuine Bathurst had come out with Macquarie to view the new prisoners. The nobleman was stricken dumb by the awful plight of these wretches, a few of whom he recognized because of the sensations their arrests had caused before he left England.

There was Wharton, the branch bank manager from Sussex—the fellow who had calmly admitted his defalcations, claiming that he had spent the money as he went along, and that nothing was left. Of course he had not been believed, since the missing funds reached the staggering sum of a quarter million pounds. The bank had offered him terms on his charges, if he would disgorge. Bathurst wondered if he had done so in the end.

There was the saturnine Dr. Lethridge, known to be a murderer. He had been held, his trial postponed, because the police were still searching for the *corpus delicti* of a young woman. Evidently they had not found it, after all, or the medico would have gone to the gallows at Datmoor.

There was the English Nihilist, Simcoe, who had wangled his way into the House of Commons, only to . . .

That second the thoughts of Lord Bathurst whirled. He almost staggered back, lifting one lace-cuffed arm as if to ward off a blow.

His slightly protuberant eyes bulged farther. He gasped, and for a second no words at all would come. Then . . .

"Blaxland! You!" he screamed in horror and dismay.

The whole line halted, even the guards staring, forgetting their tasks. There in front of the English peer a tall, tattered and filthy specimen slowly straightened from a stoop of apathy. It was shocking to see that this was a youth no more than twenty-two or twenty-three years of age at most, though his sunken, bloodshot eyes came from their glaze of numbness to a wild gleam like that of a caged tiger.

His eyes were almost all of his face that could be seen. His hair was flaming copper in spite of the dirt. It was long enough to reach his shoulders. His face to the cheek bones bristled with a rather coarse six-inch beard of the same color. Out of this tangle came the one feature Bathurst instantly had recognized—the hawklike, imperious Blaxland nose.

Though not of royalty, and not of great wealth any longer, the Blaxlands traced their ancestry back to Pepin the Short—and were prouder, perhaps, than Bathurst himself.

GEORGE CECIL BLAXLAND said nothing. His blue eyes flamed; for he knew well that Bathurst had come to the Antipodes chiefly to avoid seeing a Blaxland marry the winsome miss they both had courted. Now the peer would have a clear field, no doubt.

Incoherent, driven by emotions no doubt as mixed as the snuff he blended according to the secret formula bequeathed by Charles Fox, Bathurst ran forward and seized the arm of the unfortunate youth, demanding the reason for the chains and the banishment. At the time Bathurst himself had left England this young lieutenant of the London Guards seemed to have a happy future assured. The sweetest belle of the London season had plighted her troth to him.

The guards, awakened to their duties, would have interfered; but Lachlan Macquarie himself signaled quiet. In view of what Bathurst was doing for Australia in her need, they could not grudge him a few moments' breach of iron discipline.

The convict shook off Bathurst's arm. Inside that copper-red head pride and bitterness surged up in an engulfing hate of man and circumstance.

"Unclean! Unclean!" he gritted savagely, mocking the cry of a leper at Jerusalem's gate. "A private insult. A duello on the Mall at dawn. And I am condemned to three more years of chains and a lifetime of exile!"

"W-what—who was it?" stammered Bathurst, appalled.

"My superior officer, Captain Vivian Laidlaw."

Now Bathurst really understood. Laidlaw had been the hero—or villain—of may a court scandal. He had killed three men in pistol duels; and each time London sighed and marveled that one who needed killing so badly should have such skill with weapons. Now he had met one more skilled or more lucky; and probably one high-born lady wept her heart out for the scoundrel, and demanded vengeance on the survivor.

"I—I surely can do something about it—for you . . ." stuttered the peer. "You do not deserve this. I . . ."

Blaxland leaned toward him. The grim slash of a mouth scarcely parted, as he spoke so the others could not hear.

"I ask nothing for myself!" he said. "Be good to Elspeth and teach her to forget. Good-by!"

As if he had commanded the file of convicts, all started the weary forward shuffle then, and Bathurst was left to his snuff and his generous impulses—and his thoughts of Elspeth Stuart.

Macquarie came then, questioning. Bathurst told him of Blaxland, imploring kindly treatment for the young man until such time as he, Bathurst, could set in motion an application for full pardon.

As for himself, an immense impatience had seized the English lord. He would not wait for a cleaner ship. He would return to England immediately upon the *Balmoral Castle*.

3

THAT MEETING with Bathurst, who had been a friend of his father and then his own rival, was a rebirth for Blaxland. The nightmare of the prison transport was finished. The stiff jolt of finding right here in Australia, able to gloat on his misery, the forty-year-old London fop whom he had vanquished for the favors of Elspeth Stuart, straightened him up from apathy and the numbness of

despair. It was like an unexpected and agonizing plunge into ice water.

The effect upon red-headed George Blaxland was savage indeed. He had been resolved upon ending his misery at the first chance; and had nothing but curses for the fate that let the men chained on both sides of him in the *Balmoral Castle's* hold both succumb to the spotted fever which passed him as immune.

Now he tensed his tall, magnificent body, and swore grating, inward oaths that he would fool them all. He would serve his time until a chance came for escape. Then he would take it, no matter what the risk. To spend three years in chains was out of the question.

Almost the first word he heard in the prison was the announcement of the Bathurst and Macquarie prizes for the discovery of a way through the Blue Mountains. Once each month a convict who was willing to chance hardship or death was to be offered an opportunity to explore. If he failed he would have to return to complete his sentence; but great prizes were to be the rewards of success.

Under Macquarie, the bare barracks of prison buildings had been cleansed regularly. That much of mediaeval horror had been lifted; but the cells, each housing two convicts were large enough just to admit two stacked bunks of boards and straw, and leave a space eight feet by three at the side for all the rest of life for two men.

Even at night each convict wore a leg shackle, to which was attached a fifteen pound round shot and a short length of chain. This was a hideous torture to the one who had to accept the top bunk, since the bunks themselves were narrow and barely six feet long. A sleeping convict in the top bunk could not afford a nightmare, or he was likely to find himself yanked out to the floor suddenly by the fall of the heavy round shot!

Blaxland had only a few minutes in which to make the acquaintance of his cellmate, a pig-eyed, pale creature named Moebus, serving the last of a deportation year in chains for repeated offenses of a statutory nature.

One glance at the bestial face had made Blaxland shudder and turn away in dismay. To be shut in with this witless animal! It curdled the blood in his throat.

Immediately, however, he was taken out of the cell. His mane of hair was chewed short by the dull scissors of a prison barber. Then his beard was cut, and clippers brought him to a strange pallor both of cheeks and scalp.

Next he was sent, with four more new prisoners, to the pool. This was a sea water tank where once a month the convicts bathed. Here he dove and swam, lathered himself from head to toe with the green soft soap provided in a round tub.

On the ocean side, the breakers, driven by the January trade winds out of Samoa, were splashing spray thirty feet above the sea wall. White horses rode the crests of rollers as far out on the ocean as eye could reach.

Blaxland saw. The horror of a return to the narrow cell, with that insensate, bestial creature as an only companion, was unendurable. Now with the cleansing and the cold plunge, something akin to the old vitality was coursing his veins. His head came up in a defiance to fate.

"Better to die clean, and trying!" he said to himself.

He walked about, as if selecting a place in the pool for his final dive. A guard with flintlock musket and fixed bayonet accompanied him closely, only too willing to kill one or more of these prisoners who had come to take the bread from his own mouth.

SUDDENLY BLAXLAND whirled. There was almost a smile on his wide mouth as he caught one arm of the guard before the latter could bring down his weapon from shoulder.

A jerk with all his strength—and yelling his anger and alarm, the uniformed soldier took an involuntary header into the bathing pool, musket and all!

Over on the other side a second guard swung his musket and fired pointblank. Too hasty. The ball whistled past Blaxland's ear. He poised, waved a hand, and dove squarely into the slate colored side of a roller about to break against the sea wall!

The attempt was not wholly unreasoned. Visibility was poor; Blaxland hoped to swim out far enough so that he would be lost to sight of those on shore. Then he would attempt to parallel the shore, certain that the prison guards would hesitate long before launching a small boat in this sea. If he could stick to it long and

far enough, he would slip ashore and hide somewhere until night. Then he would try to steal clothes and some sort of outfit.

What he would do then, in this parched land where even the masters of the penal colony were themselves near to starvation, had not seemed important — as it was not. Blaxland knew he was doomed to fail, ten seconds after his white body clove the water. He was tossed, smothered, well-nigh thrown back to be battered into a bloody mass against the sea wall.

A strong swimmer since early boyhood, Blaxland fought with all his strength in the smother of waters, and succeeded only in keeping away from the sea wall until it ended, and the shoreline of Port Jackson stretched to receive him.

A dozen guards now were there waiting. Occasionally one shot, though there was manifestly no need. Grimly Blaxland swam until the last of his strength, depleted by the months on the prison transport, suddenly left his arms and legs. Exhausted, turning blue in the face, he was lifted high by the next breaker and flung into the shallows, there to be turned over and over like a log of dead wood, until the guards waded out and caught him by the arms.

He knew nothing more until the first stinging bite of the knout across his back brought him to pain and a sort of consciousness. Spread-eagled, arms and legs shackled, he was hanging upright on the gallows-like whipping post.

Thirty strokes, administered with gloating satisfaction by the ape-like Matt Henry, executioner of the prison. His arms, toughened by years of the sledge and anvil previous to convict days, made his knout-wielding a matter of blood and stripes.

Blaxland came awake with a scream in his throat, but he throttled it into a choking gasp; and thereafter — even when he fainted and came back after the last stroke, to find buckets of sea water being sloshed over his prone figure on the ground — his slash of mouth tightened and he made no further sound.

The sea water bit into the welts on his back. When they urged him upright he was naked, and so weak two guards had to drag him to the solitary cell which would be his portion for a month.

There was one net gain from it all. He saw no more of the degenerate, Moebus.

LACHLAN MACQUARIE, who might have stopped or ameliorated this punishment, knew nothing at all of the occurrence. The prison warden had full charge of such minor details; and he knew nothing of Blaxland save the bare statement that he had been convicted of treason, cashiered from His Majesty's army, sentenced to three years in chains and banishment from the British Isles for life.

Ironically enough, though his fare was scant and he saw no human being save two surly guards, Blaxland much preferred his solitary confinement to the companionship of Moebus. Heavily chained, he spent nearly double the usual time in sleep, making up much of the exhaustion of the past months. During waking hours he forced himself to exercise systematically, gradually bringing tone to his long, supple muscles, in spite of the bad air and food.

"Sometime there will come a better chance," he told himself grimly. "I'll be ready!"

He tried hard to apply for the chance to make the explorer's attempt through the constricting barrier of the Blue Mountains, but the guards would not even transmit the message. This month a convict named Fessenden was chosen. He was given a light pack of equipment, knife, hatchet, flint and steel, and provisions for ten days. He was escorted out to the foothills and earnestly bidden Godspeed by Lachlan Macquarie himself.

The eighth day following, one of John MacArthur's shepherders found him crawling on hands and knees. One leg was broken from a fall, and he was dying of thirst, having been unable to reach water after his accident in a rocky gorge.

Restoratives failed; and he died the next morning. This had a sobering effect upon the candidates for the prizes. A number of the more timid settlers who had been getting ready to try drew in their horns. Only a Lieutenant Wentworth, with a comrade, started out — taking with them a palpably absurd amount of impedimenta, which they were forced to cache before they had penetrated the mountains a distance of one-half mile.

A food ship did come then from England, which relieved the terrible stringency; but the rations in her hold were weevily and almost inedible. They had been what chandlers called "guff" in the first place; and the stormy, overlong sea passage made them truly

foul. Just the same, the big colony at Botany Bay received them with prayers of thanksgiving.

Bathurst had sailed with the prison transport. He had struggled with his feelings and his conscience in respect to Blaxland. In the end he had sworn to himself to do something for the youth on reaching England; but he had sensed that Blaxland himself would misconstrue any prison visit, thinking it false pity. So he did not even leave a message.

As soon as the lists of convicts with their sentences were put before him, Lachlan Macquarie, commuted all the terms by a deduction of one year. He paused, frowning, with his quill pen hovering above Blaxland's name. But he put off action there, meaning to have a talk with the convict. The press of the food ship's arrival put the matter out of mind for the time being.

Deaths among the convicts who had just arrived numbered at least two each day during this month. One scarlet week at the last of the month eighteen succumbed to the various weaknesses and diseases contracted during the voyage.

The soil was clay and gravel, iron hard. The feet of the splendid Merino sheep raised by MacArthur and others had trodden the surface into dust; but below that the drought had an even harsher grasp. Burying the bodies of dead convicts had become a nightmare task.

CHISHOLM, WARDEN of the prison, tried sinking them in the bay; but two days later the crab-mutilated carcasses were disgorged upon the beach and had to be buried anyway.

So convicts were told off as burying squads. It was punishment duty that all abhorred; so that was why George Cecil Blaxland was chosen. Chisholm had not yet been informed that any favors were to be given this red scorpion of a man, desperate and dangerous. So with a hoarse-voiced bull of a man with a black-beard, a veritable Hercules who had fought his way bareheaded out of an English prison only to be recaptured three days later, Blaxland was set to digging a long trench which would hold the bodies of four convicts.

Three guards with muskets and fixed bayonets kept careful watch over their toil. Both these men were known to be willing to accept

the most desperate odds; and it was strange that all three guards, getting one startled look into the cold blue fire of Blaxland's eyes, counted him the worse of the two.

The black-bearded fellow, whose name was Moss, grumbled in his barrel chest with every grating spadeful he turned, occasionally bursting forth in an inarticulate, coughing roar like that of a caged lion being tormented.

Blaxland swung a pick methodically, glad of this form of exercise. He had sized up the situation, and decided that nothing offered a promise of escape; so he worked well and quietly. Good conduct might cause vigilance to be somewhat relaxed in the future.

But fate sets off its fireworks without regard to the auspiciousness of occasion. Two of the guards, half alert, stood behind Moss. The third guard, who happened to be the same irascible fellow whom Blaxland had hurled into the bathing pool, stood directly behind the red-haired convict, his bared bayonet never more than twenty inches away from the gleaming muscles of Blaxland's bare shoulders.

This guard wanted only a shadow of an excuse. His teeth emitting faint grinding sounds, he waited. Just one false gesture with that pick, and Blaxland would have twelve inches of triangular steel rammed into his backbone . . .

Gorilla-like, Moss touched off the fuse. Like a grouchy old bear he had grumbled, roared, and subsided, only to break forth again. Everything about this job infuriated him, especially the cool, efficient fellow convict with whom he was paired.

Moss had no thought of escape. But as a half hour passed he began to find it impossible to restrain his churlish temper.

He suddenly erupted. One roaring cough, and he straightened from the trench, lifting a spadeful of clay and gravel and flinging it straight into the face of his astonished fellow convict!

Then as if crazed by this partial letting-off of steam, he scrambled forward out of the trench, swinging his spade high over his head, with the intent of braining Blaxland then and there.

The two guards behind him fired simultaneously; and the heavy musket balls tore through Moss's chest from behind. He pitched forward, red froth bubbling from his lips, and slowly slid back into the half-dug trench. He would be violent no more, but would

be accorded the place of honor in this grave he had helped to dig.

That was the least important part. Surprised by the shower of clay and gravel, which an upflung arm barely kept from his eyes, Blaxland staggered back two steps.

That was almost the chance the irascible guard behind him had been looking for. Not a chance to kill the prisoner, perhaps, but a good chance for a measure of vengeance. With a satisfied snarl on his lips, he thrust forward the bayoneted musket, jabbing the keen steel four inches into Blaxland's thigh.

"Back to work, ye slother!" he snarled. "If there's fightin to be done . . ."

The double report of musketry cut short his words, and that instant Blaxland, involuntarily leaping at the pain in his leg, half-whirled. The knowledge flashed through the red-head's brain that two of the three guards had fired their muskets, and would not be able to reload for at least forty seconds. Here was a chance for escape, with only one man barring the way!

All that inspiration had come in one-tenth of a second after the report, Blaxland's mind working like chain-lightning. With not even a hesitation, the action seeming continuous, he gripped the pick handle in his right hand and swung it sidewise with all his strength—against the grinning guard who had pricked him!

Even then the convict had kept his head. He turned the double-pointed pick sidewise, so that while the guard was smashed from balance, and would nurse a broken forearm as well as an augmented inner fury, it was not murder.

The guard screamed in a high-pitched voice, falling to the ground and dropping his musket. Instantly Blaxland stooped, seized the musket—useful only for the bayonet which could be detached later—and with pick in his other hand he turned and sprinted with all his speed for the quarter-mile distant scrub which encroached from the foothills of the mountain barrier.

By the time the two other guards had shouted the alarm lustily, and had reloaded their firearms, the bell atop the main administration building was tolling the message of escape.

Lachlan Macquarie found out, just a few minutes later, that the convict he had intended to appoint to a light task of some descrip-

tion about the offices had disappeared after overcoming an armed guard.

"But we'll get him in a week," promised the aroused prison warden. "And this time I'll have Matt Henry cut him to pieces with the knout!"

The governor frowned at this threat, but he said nothing. After all, prison discipline had to be maintained; and probably this red scorpion, as the guards called him, was far more of a villain than the sensitive Lord Bathurst imagined.

4

THE EASTERN SIDE of the Blue Mountains is vertical chaos, as far as travel is concerned. In physical appearance it is something like northwestern British Columbia in the Cascade and Coast Ranges. Soil is thin or nonexistent, and rock is everywhere.

Canyons with sheer rocks for faces, and a multitude of seepage waterfalls lacing down the forbidding cliffs, run everywhere. The mountains themselves are only about 3,500 feet in height; but the canyons actually drop below sea level, and the contrasts are appalling.

A thin, discouraged mallee scrub exists part way up the mountains. Below that, in seasons of rain, there is grass and some other vegetation. Above that on the eastern side, nothing.

The bottoms of the gorges look from the heights as though strewn with roses. The truth is terrible. Tangles of prickly pear impenetrable to man or horse have grown there ten feet deep. What seems to be roses are the bright red fruit of this plague plant.

Tough goanna lizards six feet in length live there. The kookaburra or laughing jackass flutters, and yells his strident derision.

Apostle birds in their invariable groups of twelve sit around and debate momentous affairs between their meals of pear fruit.

They are harried, like so many savants tormented by urchins in their deliberations, by scores of cheeky little bower birds, who exist to annoy. Noisy minahs (soldier birds) squawk as they fly; and the tiny kangaroo mice come out to dance under the hot moon.

But none of these creatures is acceptably edible for man. True, goanna flesh has been eaten by starving men—just as the chuck-walla of the American deserts and the rattlesnake have been eaten in linches—but the goanna is coarse of flesh, and is said to taste like sheep dip.

George Blaxland gained the first clumps of mallee—dwarf and tired-looking eucalyptus—which dotted the dusty sheep range back of the town of Sydney and the convict barracks. Here was the first crucial test of escape. Thirty-four miles of rolling, somewhat broken, but almost shelterless land lay between him and the first gorges of the mountains. The small streams here had dried up months ago. He would be pursued immediately, probably by the prison's prize pair of blacktrackers imported from Van Dieman's Land.

Once out of sight, the fugitive detached the bayonet and flung away the musket. The eighteen inch triangular needle of steel was a splendid weapon for close personal combat, but a lot of grinding and honing on stones would have to be done before it could serve as a knife.

"Maybe I can make a spear and use it for a point," reflected Blaxland, slowing his dogtrot now to a long, distance-eating stride. Behind him the bell tolled the alarm, and there were faint noises of activity in and about the barracks; but so far there was no dust of a pursuing party in the still, dry air.

A dull, rolling rumble caused him to look up, startled. Far ahead there, above the height of the mountain barrier, a black storm cloud was rising. Its opaque heart was split asunder by the crooked tines of forked lightning. A storm coming! It had not rained for eight months in Sydney; and with the other newcomers, Blaxland had rather taken for granted that it never did rain. If the mountains only did not condense all the moisture now in those clouds—why, he would be safe from pursuit!

More than that, the sheep raisers and farmers would be so overjoyed at rain, they they would forget all about the escape of one probably crazy convict, fled to perish in the wild gorges of the Blue.

Just the same, Blaxland cut away at an angle from the straight line of flight, and sought a high, rocky ridge. Here his footprints did not show at all to an untrained eye; and with help of wind

and perhaps rain, he hoped they would be too scant sign for even blacktrackers. These strange but highly skilled natives had the reputation of being able to follow cold and invisible spoor, where even bloodhounds were at fault.

Though he never once saw them, at almost this very moment of afternoon they were put on his track. They followed for perhaps two miles—and then deluging rain descended. Chisholm, the warden, and the guards with him, then called back the backtrackers.

"We'll pick him up sooner or later," said the warden grimly. "Ain't a bit of use taking too much trouble, with those mountains for our outside prison walls. Can't get away anywhere, can he? "

WITH WHICH unanswerable argument the case rested—insofar as the convict settlement was concerned. All sheep stations and farms were warned to be on the lookout for the desperate red-head, who would be driven by famine to some attempt at breaking and entering; or perhaps to a holdup. A reward of ten pounds was posted George Cecil Blaxland, dead or alive—a contemptuous gesture, indeed, toward a man whose ancestor was that warrior king of the Franks, the father of Charlemagne . . .

The heavens opened and a cloud-burst smote the thirsty land. For two hours, as Blaxland trudged doggedly westward, blinded now by the sheets of water that sluiced into his face, the eight inch layer of dust underfoot still clogged on his feet in rubbery mudballs. Then gradually it changed into a slithery, homogeneous mire, treacherous for footing, but not so heavy. The dry washes and old stream beds became rivulets.

In the blue-black twilight of a thunderstorm sunset they were brimming rivers, hastening with their new loads of silt into the mysterious heart of the mountains, bound for that mythical inner sea of Australia in which the best theorists of that day sincerely believed.

Blaxland made good progress. Just before total darkness came he found an empty hut used as a line camp occasionally by sheepherders. Here he flung himself down upon a heap of dry and brittle branches which had served someone as a bed, and slept.

He awoke with the rising sun slanting into his face through the doorless doorway. Refreshed but ravenously hungry, he knew he had to work fast and reach some kind of a base where he could

lie hidden. First, however, he had to have food and at least a sketchy outfit if he would survive.

"I'll never be taken alive!" he said aloud. "Better to starve, or to fight it out to the end."

Still carrying the pick, and with the unsheathed bayonet thrust backward through the waistband of his trousers, he started on westward, seeing a height of land from which he could see the ocean and the town of Sydney—and also from which he might glimpse an outlying farm which it would be possible to raid.

The mountains seemed no more than a mile or so distant in the clear, refreshing morning that followed the storm. Everywhere the ground steamed; and in a miraculously short while the earth, so dead with the long drought, would be sending up new shoots of grass and other verdure. In three days the whole dry valley would be carpeted with flowers and for the time being the drought would be forgotten.

A half hour later the fugitive reached the summit of a bald rock shaped like the prow of a great rusty ship; and from here he scanned all of the ground between himself and Botany Bay. There was no evidence of pursuit, and he turned about, satisfied.

There was no building or sheep station in sight, barring only the empty shack in which he had spent the night. But over the long brown crest of a ridge to northwestward Blaxland discerned a column of smoke which meant human beings.

On the side of the slope, as he climbed, he encountered the gaunt figures of a small band of Merinos. His eyes narrowed as he looked at them. They would have to serve, if he could not get other food soon, though the starved creatures looked as though there would be no meat at all upon them. The thought of raw mutton made him grimace; but the fare of the prison transport had cured him of squeamish nonsense forever.

WHEN HE reached the crest of the ridge he took one look—and instantly dropped prone. Almost directly below him, in a sheltered elbow of the higher ground, nestled a one-room cabin of the type later to be known derisively as a *gunyah* (native name for a hut). Extensive sheep pens looked well kept, however;

and Blaxland guessed this was one of the small outfits which had copied the idea of John MacArthur.

Smoke still rose from the clay chimney, but no one was in sight. Quietly the fugitive withdrew, then made a half-mile circuit, descending to the valley and approaching the cabin from the direction of the pens.

Though Blaxland gave the matter no thought, he was a truly fearsome object when he dropped the pick and came forward crouching toward the blind side of the cabin. His clipped cheeks and scalp looked on fire with an unholy orange-copper glow. Arms and chest, except for what looked like a fallen Vandyke of red hair just over his breastbone, were almost spectrally white.

And if one caught a glimpse of his back and shoulders, they were ribbed white in crosswise scarifications, like a washboard.

The prison dungarees had shrunk from the rain, and were half-way to his knees—and tight about the thighs. He was barefooted, of course; but since reaching Sydney the soles of his feet had toughened. He was not troubled on the plains, though before he could hope to win through the Blue Mountains he would have to get adequate boots somehow.

Fortune had decided to smile on him for a change. He had chanced upon the habitation of one Pete McCulley, who was a hermit sheep raiser through the unanimous though tacit vote of his neighbors—and of the townsmen and settlement officials as well.

McCulley was a black Scot, six feet three of stature, and with brows that made one jet smudge across his low forehead. He had been branded in Glasgow with the block T, which warned every chance acquaintance that he was a twice-convicted thief. So when he had tried the same game in Liverpool, they gave him short shrift. They cut off his left ear, sentenced him to a year in chains and perpetual banishment from the British Isles.

He had owned some property, though, and so when his chains were struck off and he was free to become an Australian colonist he obtained the money and invested in a band of sheep. The venture had not done well; and yet Pete McCulley's larder was always well stocked, and there were always jugs of white rum buried under the floor his cabin.

When Pete rode in on his rare trading visits, other men watched him warily, for he was always quarrelsome. He had trained his long black hair to cling wetly to his forehead, covering the T-brand. Yet everyone knew it was there, just as they knew that Pete McCulley would remain a wrong 'un as long as he lived.

THIS MORNING, the branded hermit was ferocious of temper. He had slept badly, awakening with an attack of shakes before dawn. These had been cured with several swigs of raw rum; but now that he was dressed and up, he felt sleepy again. There could be something done now with the remnant of his herd, since a few days would see the spinifex and more tender grasses green on the hillsides. But Pete let his damper burn while he sat with his head in his hands.

With a curse he threw it out of the door.

The billy was boiling with an extravagant handful of tea in it. He swilled down a pint tin cup of it, cooled and laced with rum, and then momentarily felt better. Stretching, he raised clenched fists and hammered them on the low roof. Then he walked to the open door—only to bring up with a growl of wonder as a pink-headed apparition came from nowhere and thrust the point of a long, keen dagger against his stomach!

"Hands up! Hold them there and back up!" commanded George Blaxland, wishing he had a pistol so he could carry through this act in approved highwayman style.

"Huh!" grunted McCulley, still doubting his eyes. "Who are you? And what d'you think to gain from any stand-and-deliver on a lone sheepman? I have no money . . ."

"Gold's of no use to me," said Blaxland. "Turn about."

Rapidly he ran a hand over the giant's anatomy, searching for weapons. There proved to be a long knife in the right boot, but otherwise McCulley was unarmed. Tossing the knife out of the door, the intruder reached around to unbuckle the hermit's belt, intending to use this to bind the giant's wrists.

THAT WAS the Scot's opportunity, and he made use of it. Suddenly bending forward away from the knife point, he thrust back one leg in a raking motion. Surprised, and with no intention

of doing more than threaten with the bayonet anyhow, Blaxland found his own legs swept from under. He fell heavily, dropping the bayonet. And with a roar of malicious triumph, the branded hermit swung completely about and dove for him on the floor, great arms extended for the bear hug of the rough-and-tumble brawler.

A fencer of fair skill, and champion of his form at Eton at school-boy fisticuffs, Blaxland was agile for a six-footer. He partially dodged the diving lunge, and slammed over a terrific right hook to McCulley's ear as the latter descended.

As a result the surprised hermit found his forehead and nose smashing down to the floor, while his death grip on the robber did not materialize satisfactorily. McCulley scrabbled awkwardly on the floor, rising to his knees, pawing for the clinch which never had failed to bring him a chance for gouges, bone-breaking, and final victory over an opponent.

He got Blaxland's corded but slender left wrist. But just then the fugitive slammed the heel of his open palm squarely into McCulley's nose. Blood spurted. The blow, even more effective than the impact of a clenched fist, blinded the hermit with pain. His grip on the wrist loosened.

Instantly then Blaxland wrenched free, and came to his knees, then to his feet. One backward step, then a crouch and a powerful uppercut punch as McCulley staggered up to go blindly for him, and there was a crunching impact which no one could mistake.

Even Blaxland knew this was enough. He stepped back. The giant's arms fell limply to his sides. The black irises of his eyes turned skyward. Then he swayed forward slowly, still erect, and fell forward as a ladder falls, striking with a concussion which shook the flimsy cabin.

For a moment then Blaxland feared seriously that he had killed the man—and murder of a free settler who had done nothing to him was not in the convict's calculation. A short examination was reassuring enough, however. McCulley lived. His jaw was canted sidewise, broken, so he would be miserable and vengeful enough, but his heart beat strongly. In a quarter hour or thereabouts he would

One glance at the branded T on the hermit's forehead removed Blaxland's last qualm. This was necessity, of course, and he would

have despoiled anyone of the outfit he had to have; but it eased conscience to know that the victim was a man who had stolen from other men.

Just as the man on the floor groaned and stirred for the first time, Blaxland quietly left the cabin. On his feet were stout boots, a trifle large but of excellent quality. He wore a flannel shirt, brown corduroy trousers with the ends tucked into the boots, and a broad leather belt from which depended a pistol, McCulley's knife in sheath, a filled powder horn, a leather pouch of bullets, and a sack containing flint and steel.

On his shoulders rested a light pack containing condiments, flour, sugar, tea, salt pork, a coil of light rope, and a haunch of boiled mutton wrapped in cloth.

Noon found him sixteen miles to westward, in the foothills of the Blue Mountains, apparently unpursued.

Dropping his pack, he lighted a fire for tea and damper.

5

ALONE. The first day or two, finding a deep niche in a canyon wall where he could cut branches and fashion a hidden shelter which would serve as a base camp, the verve and inspiration of escape from chains held up Blaxland's spirits.

Then came inevitable reaction. His first gallant attempts to thread the mazes of canyons, or climb more than a little way toward the high ridge to westward, met with the same rebuffs all the exploring parties—from those of Bass, Governor Hunter, Bareiller and Caley, up to this last unfinished attempt by Lawson and Wentworth—had suffered.

Scaling these vertical rock walls was impossible in most places. Threading the faces of the cliffs, hanging always above a sheer drop to the terrible prickly pear beds below, got nowhere. Each time Blaxland thought he was making progress he came to a dead end and was forced to retrace his steps.

He became moody, thinking of the sweet girl whom he always would love but who doubtless would forget him, after a few days

of tears, in the gaiety of London and the attentions of—Bathurst.

"Damn Bathurst!" he gritted aloud, but then he shook his head. The English lord had an excellent reputation; a widower, he had devoted himself to serious things, instead of following the rake-hell course too common among his kind.

His courtship of Elspeth had been a dignified and flattering affair; and probably the only reason he had lost out in the first place to the redhead had been the latter's impetuosity. Now it was certain in Blaxland's mind that Elspeth would become Lady Bathurst. Separated forever by the width of a world, and the insuperable barriers of disgrace and banishment from the youth she had loved, that certainly was the common sense solution. Yet what real man ever yielded the first love of his hot-blooded youth to common sense and resignation?

All the while his brain was saying one thing, Blaxland was planning, hoping, striving to overcome in some fashion the insuperable odds. Ten days of complete failure dragged by, and his provisions were almost gone. He had shifted his base camp twice, working gradually northward; but so far even the most reckless climbing and arduous clambering along the rocky falls of the Nepean River had been fruitless. It began to look as though these thousand-foot cliffs extended without a break—save for the roaring torrents which no man could wade or navigate—the entire bow-shaped length of the Blue Mountains.

Blaxland had browned and toughened. His shoulders were broadening, his stomach growing flat and plated with muscle. He stooped a little from so much climbing where hands were ever more valuable than feet.

He had resolved upon another raid for supplies—other than mutton, which he had killed and eaten whenever he needed fresh meat. So far three of John MacArthur's lambs never would bring wool to the shearing shed; but a straight diet of lamb or mutton palls quickly on any palate.

There was a somewhat larger cabin some two miles to the east. Blaxland resolved to raid it the following night; but that raid was to be postponed, for an unexpected reason.

At sunrise the outlaw emerged from his cave camp to see the smoke of a campfire about half a mile to the west—and higher

into the mountains than he thus far had been able to penetrate.

It was the base camp of Lawson and Wentworth, though he did not know that. He set himself the task of climbing and reconnoitering—only to discover to his bitter disappointment that reaching that high shelf from which the smoke arose was a job for two men with ropes.

One man alone could not hope to attain it—at least, not from the approach Blaxland tried. There might be another route through another of the canyons which crossed and crisscrossed back in a bewildering maze.

That must have been the case; for just as Blaxland was turning back he froze, gripping a projection of rock with one hand. Down there, just the other side of a narrow rock divide from the spot of his own camp, he glimpsed a man's figure.

In this lonely land any man at all was a cause for wonderment. But this one, scrambling down over jagged boulders, leaping short distances, climbing rapidly when an obstruction intervened, held the bushranger's rapt attention. Where under God's canopy did he think he was going in such an all-fired hurry?

Then right there in plain sight the ant-like figure halted. He seemed to shove mightily against the brown rock. A piece of it swayed, then rolled over, revealing a black dot which Blaxland guessed to be the mouth of a cave.

The human ant bent down and disappeared.

THEN MINUTES later, as the bushranger still watched, the man reappeared. He was carrying something on his back now, and hastily he retraced the difficult course he had come. In fifteen minutes he was out of sight, even though Blaxland slid and crawled down to try to follow his path. "Going back to that high camp another way," decided the watcher. "And down there's his cache . . ."

This raid upon the cave and the provisions, ammunition and tobacco he found plentiful there was an entirely different thing to Blaxland than the armed robbery of the T-branded sheepman, McCulley—though both crimes would be entered against his score as heinous.

Setting his jaw sternly against sentimentality, he helped himself to all he could carry, making a dent in the surplus which the two men had been unable to carry with them into the higher camp.

On leaving, however, he hesitated. With pencil, on the top of a packing case, he scrawled a message:

I expect to pay for all this provender if I win through alive.
G. C. Blaxland, *Bushranger*.

He had coined a word which no one had used before.

With sufficient essential food now for many days, Blaxland shifted his camp a mile farther to the north. He saw the approach this other explorer had used, and passed it. Leaving the river behind (one stream or another always had seemed the obvious means of attacking the problem of the mountains), he skirted a low, brown ridge. Then on impulse he halted. What could lie on the western side of this hogback which by dint of some hard climbing he surely could surmount?

Making a temporary cache of provisions, he set forth; and two hours later he attained a better coign of vantage than he had won at any time previously. Over at his left and ahead, hidden from view, was that camp of the other men which sent up smoke at regular intervals. They did not seem to be moving forward; and the truth which Blaxland could not guess was that a minor misfortune—a shower of rock dust in Lawson's eyes, causing inflammation—had made them wait three days.

The night Lieutenant Wentworth, visiting their cache again, made the infuriating discovery that they had been robbed by some unknown person named Blaxland. He carried the news over to the nearest sheep station, whence in due course it was reported to the prison warden and Lachlan Macquarie.

If the guards were able to capture the self-styled bushranger now, he certainly would be hanged; and even for the sake of Bathurst the governor would not interfere.

With the clue of his known presence on foot in the broken country near the cache, the prison warden, Chisholm, sent a squad of guards converging from a wide fan formation and closing in on the mountains at this point. It did not seem possible that Blaxland could escape; and the theory was that he had holed up in one of the few caves of the region, probably one where there was some seepage water available.

But in spite of the fact that they bivouacked right there, and searched each day from sunrise till dusk, they failed to catch a glimpse of the badly wanted man.

Blaxland had seen them first. Unable to go back now, even to raid again when these provisions were used, he faced grimly to westward. There on those heights he would find triumph—or death.

6

A FULL WEEK of elimination and failure dragged past. Blaxland had found no way to scale the vertical cliffs, and so had devoted himself to exploring three branches of canyon all of which elbowed at various angles but kept a general westward direction.

The northernmost of the three led him fully two tortuous miles. He climbed along the side, above the deadly cactus waiting to spear and entangle him the bottom of the gorge, only to find himself in a cul-de-sac at the end, faced with cliffs of brown sandstone and scaling shale. He had to turn back, jaw set grimly.

Two more chances—perhaps.

On the second canyon side he suffered a fall, bruising one shoulder, arm and hip painfully. But he gritted his teeth and kept on. Time now was getting precious—time and food. Over there somewhere he realized that a pair of determined rivals were assaulting the heights. They might well be succeeding where a man alone could only fail. If they won through first, then all for which he had gambled would be lost, and his own life forfeited without recourse.

In desperate striving where dogged resolution holds a man to a task called hopeless there almost always is a further urge which becomes a sort of madness. Blaxland knew his love was hopeless. Yet through these days when brain as well as tendons seemed strained to the bursting point he cherished the illusion that up there ahead the sweet face of Elspeth Stuart watched him, smiling with confidence.

"I'll win, and find you somehow!" he repeated aloud many times, refusing to think of the disgrace and the twelve thousand miles of distance that lay between.

The second branch canyon promised more, once Blaxland passed the first precipitous elbow. It angled back to the south, but there was a branch from it going due west. The sides of this looked more shelv-

ing and broken. If only he could descend to the bottom of the gorge, hack a way through the cactus, and gain that branch canyon!

The whole of the first day he spent in approach and reconnaissance, finally sleeping right there on the edge of the cactus without returning to his base camp. Time enough to go back for supplies, beyond the cold damper and water he had brought along, when he made a start through the prickly pear. It towered over him there in the bottom of the gorge, and a strong odor, ranker than any recognized perfume, hung in the heated air.

With sunrise he was up, and hacking a sort of tunnel through which he could crawl across the gorge on hands and knees. It was slow work, for as soon as he had cut an amount of the thorny stuff, it was necessary either to carry it back and out, or else to thrust it piece by piece into the tangle at the sides of the tunnel.

He made one trip back, dragging all he could bind in his rope, when a startling interruption occurred. Up there high to the south, crawling along a shelf of rock—backward into the same canyon he had been traversing—came two human figures linked together by a rope.

His two rivals in this exploration!

INSTINCTIVELY BLAXLAND, thinking then perhaps these might be prison guards instead of the explorers, went back into the mouth of his cactus tunnel! He lay down, watching, watching upward, and in a few moments realized that he had not been seen. These were the explorers, and they followed this canyon back the way Blaxland had come. They appeared to be having a terrible time up there, three hundred feet above the cactus gorge, hauling themselves one by one along a broken shelf, helping each other across gaps . . .

And then it happened!

One of those human ants appeared to slip a distance of about one inch—on the scale, that is, of Blaxland's vision. Instantly there came a puff of brown dust up there on the side of the cliff.

A rumble of falling rock, faint at first, then mounting to a roar.

Scaling away unevenly, hundreds of tons of the cliff face slid down the eighty-degree angle and crashed into the cactus, not a hundred feet from Blaxland!

"God pity them ! " was the horrified exclamation wrung from the bushranger. For a half minute he could see nothing, for the brown dust like chemical fumes hung against the cliff side. But then a wind came and it moved sidewise slowly, like a curtain being drawn — and Blaxland scrambled out to his feet, a prayer and a curse of on his lips.

There, perhaps sixty or seventy feet below the vanished shelf, two motionless figures dangled and swayed above vacancy. Their rope, attached to both men's belts, had caught upon some precarious projection, halting their fall !

One moved a little. The other was limp. Evidently the shock and the falling rocks had killed or knocked out one, and hurt the other badly.

BLAXLAND WASTED no time. Within a space of seconds he was at the most favorable spot of approach, and climbing the gritty rock face as a human fly climbs the face of a building. When he chanced an upward look he could see one of the two men writhing a little, lifting an arm, then letting it fall. If only he did not move enough to displace the rope !

The first hundred feet offered three spurs or shelves where Blaxland could relax and take his bearings. He saw then that he had to go far to the side, then follow what looked like a fissure or shelf slanting upward until it was directly under the dangling men.

Twenty minutes later, with both victims of the fall quiet now, he was about fifty feet to one side of the point where the rope had caught, and a little above it. He shuddered to see that the rope had hooked across what appeared to be a rock anvil. The base was wide and heavy enough but the projection looked as though it could not hold the weight. And the rope was out within a foot of the projection's tip !

In a cold perspiration for all his exertion, and trembling, Blaxland at last crawled to the anvil base. Here he rapidly unwound his own rope under the other in such wise that both loose ends remained in his own grasp. Then sitting astride the anvil, praying that it could stand just one more stress, he eased off the caught rope, and strained until the veins came out like cords in his neck, at the jerk which ensued.

The anvil held, however; and a few seconds later Blaxland breathed in relief. Both limp bodies were on the shelf, and he pulled free the end of his own rope.

From here he had to ease the victims one at a time, to the bottom of the gorge, where he examined them. One man, he who had writhed at the end of the rope, suffered with a broken ankle and cave-in ribs on the right side. He also might have internal injuries from the jerk of the belt, for he too was unconscious now.

The other man was gory of scalp and face, and unconscious with concussion. Both might live, but they would have to have better help than the bushranger could offer.

All the rest of that long winter's day was taken in the task of moving both men back to Blaxland's base camp, and there applying restoratives and rude bandages. The man who identified himself in a husky whisper as Lieutenant Wentworth, came to full consciousness, though he seemed the more badly injured of the two. Lawson was the other's name, and his concussion was serious.

When night came, Blaxland told them he would go for help. "I'm squaring up the robbery of your cache," he told Wentworth grimly. The soldier answered nothing, but followed him out of the small circle of firelight, with wondering eyes.

Insult was heaped upon injury as far as the sheep hermit Pete McCulley was concerned, that night. The self-styled bushranger robber who had made him stand-and-deliver after a bruising fight, returned and held up Pete again with the latter's own pistol! Pete, awakened from a sodden sleep, fairly foamed at his bandaged mouth. The scoundrel was wearing Pete's boots and corduroy trousers, too! But there was nothing for it; Pete had tasted Blaxland's mettle once, that was enough. Full dressed as he always slept, he arose, growling threats, and preceded Blaxland out into the night.

Back at the camp the bushranger curtly explained. These two were important men in Sydney. Pete must go instantly and bring a doctor for them, and competent help. Blaxland motioned him off into the darkness.

"Remember, Pete McCulley," he said in grim conclusion, "I hold you responsible. If harm comes through your neglect, I shall return in the night some time for you!"

With an involuntary shiver, the sheepman set off for the nearest settlement. He had horrors enough that came in the night, without adding this bloodthirsty bushranger to them.

Blaxland moved fast. He gathered a pack of essentials, bade two unfortunate explorers farewell, and set out in the night. When he had gone far enough toward the cactus tunnel in the gorge, to feel safe from night searchers, he turned in and slept.

At the first streaks of dawn he was up and away, omitting a breakfast fire this time for fear of pursuit. But there was no pursuit. Care of the wounded men claimed all the attention of the helpers Pete McCulley brought. And Blaxland trudged on, reached the canyon where he had started to tunnel through four hundred feet of prickly pear—and found, miraculously, that the tunnel now was unnecessary!

The landslide from above had rolled out over the bottom of the gorge in a long triangle which almost crossed; and under the shale and sandstone the prickly pear had been crushed flat and buried. Blaxland reached the further side, and a side shelf of rock on which a wagon could have traveled, with no more than a slight struggle of a few moments with thorns!

"It's an omen!" he told himself joyously, seeing how the way mounted now, curving about and going steadily toward a V-notch in the blue wall of mountains. "This is the Bathurst Road to Eden!"

7

THERE IN THE notch of the Blue Mountains the lone white man stood and looked down upon the western slope, and upon the great plain stretching across mallee, desert, mulga and jungle a full two thousand miles, to far-away Northwest Cape on the Indian Ocean.

A breathless wonder filled him, a wonder that grew and grew as he slowly descended. Here was a land of giants, of abundant rainfall, of queer wild creatures that squatted on their hind legs like a kangaroo mouse, and leapt—good Lord how they leapt!

The first three big kangaroos Blaxland saw frightened him worse than he frightened them; but soon he realized that they were not

dangerous if undisturbed. He kept on. At night he camped, and the next day kept on. He meant to hold the V-notch in sight at his back, but to penetrate a little distance for the sake of killing some fresh meat, and of getting an idea of the country.

It was a mallee scrub, but what mallee! Here the eucalyptus, no more than twenty feet high back at Port Jackson, really reached its glory. It was here the only tree on Earth taller than the California sequoia, and deepest green of its luxuriant foliage.

Other trees of immense size were the collibans, the cypress pines, bloodwoods, ironbarks, with kurrajons and other species of bottle trees crowding the spaces below quite as milkweed, pitcher plants and goldenrod crowd the footing in lesser forests.

Almost at once Blaxland got into trouble. A small joey hopped up to him, unafraid, and he seized it—without meaning it any harm, but out of sheer curiosity and a wish to look at it closely. That act nearly cost him his life.

Out of the forest hopped a huge old man kangaroo, chattering fury. One of these will seize a man, and disembowel him with a stroke of a powerful hind leg. But this time Blaxland let go of the joey, dodged, and then when the old man came again, let him have it with the pistol, through the chest. The big kangaroo fell kicking; and Blaxland's meat problem was solved for the little time he had a meat problem.

Making camp right there, he skinned the big wallaby, roasted and ate his fill of the tough meat. In the morning he would start back for his triumph—and his pardon at the hands of Lachlan Macquarie. The route he had come would be difficult but by no means impossible for men on foot. Immediately the way was surveyed and known, however, the prison governor could detail a thousand convicts to road building. In a year, two years, there would be wagon teams hauling settlers into the new country . . .

THE BATHURST ROAD! Blaxland saw enough to make him supremely happy, even though he could not envision the beautifully engineered, broad concrete highway of the future, with its stream of high-powered cars threading in a couple of hours the barrier of the Blue Mountains which had balked all man's efforts but his own, for more than forty years.

Alas for dreams of immediate pardon, of a ship back to England — and of Elspeth Stuart. Too filled with his own achievement to be sensitive in the manner of those who claim a telepathic sixth sense, Blaxland gloried in the great gum-trees which towered above his little camp — and did not suspect that before sunset two score of immensely tall black figures, naked and unadorned save for white striping which made them look, in the dusk, like animated skeletons, peered with fear and wonder at this strange apparition from another world.

To the savage Parrabarras this being, with hair and face the color of the storm sunset, and skin as pale as the browned, dry grasses of the plain, was undoubtedly a species of bunyip (monster) — if, in truth, he was not Molongo or another of the chief demons of the scrub, in person. He seemed rather undersized to them, who share with the Kimberley blacks and the Aruntas of the western plains the distinction of being the tallest human beings in the world; yet why should not Molongo or Old Mooldarbie himself appear in any guise he happened to fancy? Surely this fiery hair belonged to a demon!

AT SUNSET the blacks silently withdrew, since they fear the dark and hide from it in their wurleys. But with the first streaks of gray in the sky they were up, chattering and excited. From a distance of a mile or so the awakening white man heard a council or corroborree.

Blaxland had been kept awake part of the night by the slinking dingoes, who wanted the carcass of the kangaroo. This morning he shrugged, and started preparations for breakfast and a quick return.

He was not to make it. The far-off clamor of corroborree ended. Some fifteen minutes later Blaxland looked up with a twinge of horror in his heart, to find himself circled by more than eighty painted black warriros, completely naked, and armed with spears, waddies, and queer-looking black elbows of darrah wood he soon would learn were specimens of that queerest of all weapons, the boomerang.

He quietly stood up, hand on his pistol, looking desperately for a chance to fire and run for it. The chance never came. The circle

of blacks slowly closed—not without some of the more timid members edging away to the back of the braver ones.

They closed. Careful not to harm this demon, they nevertheless urged him along, and Blaxland finally saw it was necessary to acquiesce. He accompanied them; and in the village of the Parrabarras there was feasting and rejoicing. Had they not a captive demon who undoubtedly would cast evil spells upon all enemies of their tribe? They would keep him forever . . .

And Blaxland, finding himself guarded in a special wurley, offered everything a god or demon should have—save liberty—was forced to make the best of a terrible happening.

MONTHS PASSED. The chill months of summer faded, and autumn—the spring of the Antipodes—arrived, bearing with it another drought and a specter of famine. This was the December when so many of the colonists surrendered, packing up their goods and crowding into Port Jackson to await the coming of the first food ship on which they might return. If they had to be paupers and starve, they preferred doing so in the land of their birth. There was no future in farming or sheep-raising in this dreary land hemmed in by the throttling circle of the Blue Mountains.

On the day before Christmas, when all thirty thousand of the colonists and convicts had been on half rations a fortnight, the food ship did come. Something like a riot occurred when all of the waiting, desperate ones tried to go on board with their effects before even the cargo could be landed.

In the confusion two passengers came ashore—a heavily veiled young woman, and her brother who acted as her escort. These were the two Stuarts, and they bore with them the King's pardon for a convict named Blaxland . . .

"I regret exceedingly, Miss Stuart," said Governor Macquarie gravely, "that I can do nothing for you and your brother. Lord Bathurst's efforts for Blaxland have been wasted. He is gone—probably dead. It is perhaps the best thing, after all," he concluded with a touch of grimness, "since in that case he cannot be tried for breaking prison, and for robberies committed after his escape! "

He started up then, as did Ronald Stuart, for the girl—borne up through all the trials of the long voyage by the hope of having

her fiance' restored to her—had fainted. All in vain. The name of George Cecil Blaxland was stricken from the prison rolls; but three counts, two of them capital charges, remained against him if he ever should return.

THE SECOND DAY following, a grim, stubborn man set forth on horseback to ride the parched sheep range. John MacArthur would never surrender. He saw ruin now, unless rains came almost instantly. Yet he should hang on until his last Merino sheep died of hunger.

In the broken hills of his western range MacArthur reined to a stop. Just ahead there was a slow moving cloud of dust—a band of sheep? He knew of none which should be here.

Then as he rode forward he came upon the most startling sight ever to come to the eyes of a Port Jackson setter. Here were seven almost naked men, six of them glistening black and so tall* that their heads reached even with his horse's ears!

The seventh man was shorter, not much more than six feet—and he was white!

Spellbound, MacArthur sat there, hand on his pistol. He saw the white man turn and harangue his six companions in a guttural language unknown. The six spearmen halted, casting lowering glances at the horse and its rider. A horse, of course, was an unknown species of bunyip, to them.

Them Blaxland strode forward. He was the color of Burley tobacco, from the sun, and his red hair and beard had grown long in eleven months of his captivity and wandering with the nomad Parrabarras. Yet he had a quiet assurance in his manner.

"Sir," he said in a rich, resonant voice, "I bid you carry the news to Governor Lachlan Macquarie that Blaxland, the bushranger, has returned to show him to the road to the interior of this continent! And to claim the full, free pardon promised for success in penetrating the Blue Mountains!"

MacArthur had to know more. Who were these blacks? How had Blaxland managed to control them?

The ex-convict told his story briefly. He had learned the tongue.

*Many of these natives are seven feet tall.

The tribe had wandered, and after nine months he had gained ascendancy over them, through use of his pistol and through knowledge they did not possess of some simple cooking, and medicine. He had induced six of the finest warriors to accompany him as a bodyguard back into the land beyond the mountains. He had promised that they should return safely . . .

The presence of the blacks was incontrovertible proof that Blaxland had done as he said. So, bidding them go to his home and refresh themselves, the excited sheepman galloped away. His brain was filled with plans for taking the remnants of his sheep bands through the mountains to this wonderland of luxuriant pasturage. Perhaps he could make the grade, after all !

EARLY THAT evening Lachlan Macquarie, Chisholm, the prison warden, and thirty armed guards came. They were accompanied by all the vehicles and riding horses available at Port Jackson. And miles back of them hundreds walked who could not ride. The news was the most exciting that ever had reached Botany Bay.

One sight of the giant blacks with Blaxland, and Lachlan Macquarie was convinced. He took the bushranger with him and several of his council and listened while Blaxland gave a brief chronicle of his eleven months beyond the law.

Lawson and Lieutenant Wentworth were there, the latter to corroborate a part of the tale, and also to grip the hand of the man who had saved them from a miserable death.

In conclusion Blaxland showed a red-marked map he had made on rough paper hammered out of the pith of the nipa palm. This showed the route, and also two large rivers. One of these flowed to the northwest and seemed to end in great marshes—as far as the Parrabarras had wandered in that direction.

The second river flowed to the southwest, and was a mighty stream with a swift current—probably flowing to the fabled inland sea, as Blaxland believed.

After a study of the route which would become the Bathurst Road, the governor looked at two rivers. He smiled. He took up a quill pen and wrote one word beside each river. He was naming them. Wentworth, looking over shoulder, could not restrain a chuckle.

With the simple vanity of a great man, the governor had named

the southern river the Lachlan, and the northern stream the Macquarie!

"Your black warriors will not molest my men when we go to prove this claim?" he asked. "Not that I doubt, but a road which we can use is an imperative necessity."

"I am chieftain of the Parrabarras," said Blaxland quietly. "I guarantee that they will be friends."

"A sort of king of the mallee," grinned Wentworth.

But now Lachlan Macquarie had his dramatic moment. "In respect to yourself, Mr. Blaxland," he said momentarily. "Of course you broke prison, and committed certain robberies in order to secure provisions for your exploration. Ahem!"

Here he looked about, with not the ghost of a smile. The bush-ranger slowly paled, and his hand stole to the butt of his pistol. Was this respected governor going to go back on his word?

"However," continued Macquarie ponderously, "I give you a full and free pardon for your prison break, and for those robberies committed afterward. I cannot, I grieve to say, pardon you now for the treason you committed in England."

"What?" cried Blaxland sharply. "That was the proclamation you . . ."

Here Macquarie permitted himself a beginning smile. "I cannot pardon you—because the pardon was granted in England full five months ago! Wentworth, will you ask the king's messenger, bearing the pardon, to step into this room?"

The lieutenant obeyed. To the open doorway came Elspeth Stuart, clad in the duty veils of her journey from Port Jackson. Her eyes were filled with tears of happiness, though, and she had freshened her cheeks.

"Blax!" she said, in her well remembered, husky, throbbing whisper. She lifted her arms, inviting him . . .



A NICKEL'S WORTH OF LIFE

by JAMES H. S. MOYNAHAN

TIME: When Graft ruled States

PLACE: Anytown, U.S.A.

The one witness against Big Tim Fahey, whose greed had been responsible for the deaths of many schoolchildren in busses unfit for travel, was dead—officially a suicide. Then an envelope was dropped accidentally on the floor of the post office in Henry Everett's drugstore, and Everett, whose little girl had been among Fahey's victims, knew that he could obtain justice—if he could stay alive.

HENRY EVERETT, locking his drugstore for the night, noticed the reflection of the two men in the darkened glass front of his show-window, and knew at once they spelled Death.

Everett did not want to die. Indeed, he wanted frantically to live. Not that Everett feared death—he could meet it bravely when his time came—but just now he had an urgent reason for wanting to live. The same reason that these men had for wishing him dead.



Fear warned Everett in the nick of time

Big Tim Fahey had sent these men; Everett knew it instinctively. He had known something like this was bound to happen—had known it from the instant he had slit open the blank envelope someone had dropped by mistake on the post office floor in Everett's little drugstore.

The check the envelope contained told its own story of innocent victims needlessly slaughtered, of crawling fear, of frantic murder and, now—of bribery!

When they had brought home the tiny body of Henry Everett's little daughter to him with the miserable story of her death, he had sworn an oath that the man whose greed was responsible for her death would not escape the just penalty of his crime. A school bus, crowded with laughing, singing children, among them Phyllis

Everett, had skidded, crashed through a fence, rolled down a gully to crash finally into a tree at the bottom and burst into a flaming pyre.

Evidence, when a tardy investigation of the busses was pushed, proved scandalously plentiful: The garage attendants, who had pleaded over and over that the busses were in a shocking state of repair—not fit to leave the shop. The drivers, whose gloomy jokes about "Fahey's Coffins" now proved a grim reality. Other children, more fortunate, who had survived to tell of narrow escapes on other days and in other busses.

The Governor had ordered an investigation.

Things had looked bad for Big Tim Fahey, big as he was in State politics. For once the Governor, old friend of Fahey's that he was, dared not come to the bus owner's aid. Public opinion demanded an accounting, to have attempted to sidetrack the investigation would have cost the Governor his office.

Marvin, the State's Attorney, owed his position to Big Tim Fahey. From Fahey's own ninth ward, he had served the ruddy-faced political boss faithfully—bringing to the task a certain flair for the sort of cheap oratory that wins elections in districts shakier than the old ninth ward was likely to be.

State's Attorney Marvin, Fahey's man—his tool, practically—had been entrusted with the task of prosecuting the big boss for criminal carelessness in the conduct of his bus company!

From the start, things broke well for Fahey. The stories of the children were simple enough to break down—mere rumors, hysterical imaginings of immature minds—so Fahey's attorneys put it in statements to the press. Full-page advertisements, paid for by Fahey, and subtly worded to arouse sympathy for the company and its president, did not antagonize the newspapers. The more corruptible of them, anxious for more advertising, played down the investigation as a "political crucifixion." Fahey laid out money and the State's case dwindled before the avalanche of propaganda, bribery and threats.

All but one witness.

DOMINICK CIELLO was an attendant in one of Big Tim Fahey's garages. Ciello had worked on the busses, had seen them

come in from day to day for repairs. With growing concern he had seen the most slipshod, hurried repairs made when what was called for was a complete overhaul, and resentment in his breast had grown into open revolt.

One morning Big Tim Fahey himself had come into the garage. Dominick, his natural fear of his boss's displeasure overcome by his indignation, had told Big Tim that the busses were nothing more than death traps, and asked him why he let them go out of the garage in that condition to save a few dollars.

Big Tim's answer was to fire Dominick.

When Dominick's little niece, a tot of five years, was lifted, unrecognizable, out of the mass of wreckage of the burned bus, the garage helper's rage was a terrible thing to see. He swore he would go before the grand jury with testimony that would send Fahey to prison for life.

Fahey tried to have him seen. When Fahey's emissaries—with fat checkbooks and fountain pens ready—failed to get anywhere, Fahey undertook to go and see Dominick himself.

What happened after that was never quite clear. State's Attorney Marvin, after an extensive investigation, announced that he was convinced that Dominick had committed suicide. The citizens—and they were many—who thought that Fahey had killed Dominick, didn't like State's Attorney Marvin's decision.

Henry Everett, the druggist and postmaster, had been among those who believed Marvin's whitewashing of Fahey the rawest thing in years.

"Fahey must have slipped him plenty for *that*," was the general opinion.

It had been Everett's opinion, too, up to this evening—but only an opinion. Now it was more than that—it was a conviction. The blank envelope he had picked off the floor of his drug store earlier in the evening had contained, almost as if by Divine providence, the one thing necessary to prove Fahey's deal with Marvin—the check itself, made out to the State's Attorney, and signed by Big Tim Fahey.

That check—for fifty thousand dollars—would be to a harassed public the last straw, the crowning indignity in Fahey's long career

of flouting the public. Fahey would burn for the murder of Dominick Ciello.

And now Fahey, or one of his henchmen, had discovered the loss of the check. Fahey knew that by the irony of fate, the check had probably been dropped in the postoffice, and that Everett had found it. That check meant life or death to Fahey.

But Henry Everett had some ideas on the subject of that check, too. And only death itself would stop Henry Everett from handing that check over to the authorities—into hands that could not be bought.

HENRY EVERETT pretended to examine the window display of soaps, cosmetics, cameras, patent medicines, while his brain, working madly, sought an out. The killers were approaching him from either side.

If he could get past the one closing in on his left, he might be able to make the security of his store!

In the darkened glass showwindow the slouching figures quickened their steps. Henry Everett whirled suddenly, darted for the entrance of his store.

The killers were taken by surprise.

The man on the left was the first to recover. He sprinted for the drugstore door, cutting off the druggist's retreat. His pal yelled: "Hey! Grab him!"

Too late Everett saw the wicked gleam of moonlight on the nickel-ed revolver in the hand of the thug blocking the drugstore door. The druggist's body was already hurtling through the air at his assailant when the pistol swung up, crashed its flaming message.

Everett's body slammed into the thug's. Gassy smoke from the pistol made him cough. He wondered if he was hit—you didn't feel it at first, they said.

But if the pistol in the thug's hand spelled possible death for Everett, it helped him, too. The second thug, ready to leap on his back, froze in his tracks as the pistol cracked.

"Hey, you dumb fool!" he yelled at his partner. "You trying to plug me?"

Everett battled desperately, wondering dimly why he didn't feel on his back the weight of the other thug, bearing him down. The

pistol swung for his head. He ducked, felt it rake his cheek, felt the warm blood flow out.

He grabbed for the pistol.

Luck was with him. His wildly clutching hand struck the thug's wrist, closed on it in a grip that was like the clutch of death itself.

Together they swayed, twisting, straining, grunting. Their bodies slammed against the building. Everett felt his skull crash against the wood. Was he going to faint? His hand, holding the thug's wrist, started to slip.

Behind him sounded the shifting feet of the second thug.

Everett felt himself yanked away from the wall as the thug tried desperately to free his pistol arm. After all, why not just give up? Death was peaceful — a rest from the greed and violence of this world.

Death! The echo of the word in his brain awoke remembrance. Death was what Big Tim Fahey had brought to little Phyllis. Other children would die, now, if Fahey escaped. And Fahey *would* escape if his thugs were victorious!

Henry Everett lashed his failing senses, clutched the thug's wrist with both his hands and bent forward to strain at the captive pistol.

Behind him the second thug's heavy breathing grew closer. And in a flash Everett realized what had happened!

He, Everett, was now holding the pistol pointed safely at the ground so that the second thug could close in!

FEAR WARNED him in the nick of time. Behind him the warning scrape of the thug's feet sounded, poising for a leap!

Everett's mind worked like lightning. He brought up his right knee, flexed it, drove his heel out backward at the flying figure of the thug leaping for his shoulders.

The heel caught the thug in mid-air, bent his body in the middle. He yelped in agony, piled down on the sidewalk, clutching his belly, groaning, cursing.

Everett worked the thug before him around until the man's back was toward the grovelling figure on the sidewalk. The druggist began to yank hard on the pistol, pulling forward.

The thug resisted. The whole force of his body was exerted in drawing the pistol away, and toward the man behind him on the ground.

That was just what Everett wanted.

Suddenly he relaxed, shoved the pistol away from him, toward the straining thug.

The man, caught unawares, went stumbling backwards, all the released force of his body carrying him, off balance, back toward the body of the man who lay on the sidewalk, directly in the path of his stumbling feet.

Henry Everett let go the pistol, spun.

The thug's feet struck his partner and he went over in a whirling cartwheel, the pistol flying from his startled hand. Everett, at the door, pawed over keys, found the right one, twisted it, yanked the door open, slid in, locked it!

For the moment he was safe. The shot had attracted no attention. The good citizens probably thought it had been a backfire of some car. Big Tim's men would probably not dare to crash the store. The sound of breaking plate glass would bring the radio patrol in an instant.

Everett hurried to the booth, stumbling over displays in the gloom. The phone booth lighted up when he closed the door. He fumbled in his pocket for a nickel.

His change was gone!

The shock stunned him for a second. Then he realized what must have happened. In the struggle with the thug, the money had rolled out of his pockets.

Fearfully he put a hand to his breast pocket. Had he lost the check, too? But no, it was there, safe, like an avenging angel that would put a stop, once and for all, to the evil deeds of Big Tim.

If Everett could find a nickel to telephone!

The thugs outside would not wait long. Already they were probably prowling the back, seeking a way in.

Everett knew the cash register was empty. He had cleaned it out, sent the money to the bank. The safe contained money, plenty of it, but you can't put a dollar bill in a telephone slot!

There *was* a nickel somewhere in the store; Everett knew that for a fact. The only trouble was to find it. He had heard it roll on the floor when he had dropped it earlier that evening, but a search had failed to disclose it.

HE HESITATED. Should he search for the coin, taking the chance that Big Tim's thugs would have broken in the rear by the time he should find the coin?

No. The chance was too great. He had looked for the nickel earlier and failed to find it. Time was precious. He would have to try to break out the back way and run for it!

The store was dark; he had opened the phone booth door again, cutting off the light. On tiptoe he made his way to the back room, with its cartons, its bottles of drugs and medicaments, its shelves, barred window, grilled door to the yard — protection against robbers.

He peered out. He could see nobody. With trembling fingers he fumbled for the key, inserted it in the lock, turned it. The door swung open. He slid out, closed it with infinite caution.

The littered yard was quiet. Cautiously he explored its shadowed corners with his eyes, seeking out any lurking figure who might be lying in wait, ready to pounce on him should he essay the distance to the alley.

The yard seemed clear.

Swiftly, making no sound, Everett traversed the brick walk to the alley door. He lifted the catch, swung back the battered wood on its creaking hinges . . .

At the mouth of the alley, a watching figure broke into a run. Everett saw it, hesitated, turned and raced for the other end.

A gun roared behind him. He felt a giant hand slam him forward, stumbling, to his face, as the slug took him in the shoulder.

He rolled on the ground, saw the alley door, still swinging open, a few yards away, saw the thug, up the alley, come racing down, pistol swinging at his side.

Everett stumbled to his feet. The thug stopped running, swung the pistol up. Everett half-fell inside the door to the drugstore yard, rolled against the battered door, closing it, spun the latch.

Running feet sounded outside.

Everett stumbled to the back door of the store, yanked the latticed door wide, went through it, and salmmed it shut. He slid the bolt, stood there, panting and trembling, blood dripping from his wounded shoulder to fall in slow, soft splashes to the sawdust and excelsior-strewn floor.

The window was barred with iron. The thugs could not get in that

way. The iron lattice covering the back door's window would hold them off effectively from trying to enter by that way, unless they were ready to throw all caution to the winds and make noise and commotion enough to rouse the neighbors and the police. Everett didn't think they were quite ready for that yet.

If he could just find that lost nickel!

FROM THE stock of electric fans, cameras, toasters, and electrical appliances he took a flashlight, sent its cone of light into the dark. It picked out cigarette-butts, dust, wads of chewing-bum on the worn board floor. But no nickel.

The street outside was quiet. Everett knelt, poked his beam of light under showcases, cardboard displays, wire-soda-fountain chairs.

Something round and shiny gleamed in the ray of his flash!

With a smothered exclamation of joy, Everett stooped, rescued it. The nickel!

A bell rang sharply in the silence.

It was the telephone.

Everett hurried to it, pushed inside the booth, reaching for the receiver with his left hand. His right arm, numb from his wound, hung at his side. He let the door stay open, so that the booth remained dark.

"Hello?" he murmured into the transmitter.

A hard voice said shortly: "Listen, Everett, we ain't foolin'. We know you got that check, and we'll give you just five minutes to come out and hand it over."

A red mist swam in front of Henry Everett's eyes. He gripped the door handle to keep from falling.

"You tell that boss of yours," Henry Everett said, "that I'll see him in hell before I'll give up this check. He murdered Dominick Ciello to keep him from testifying, and he murdered those innocent children that died in his deathtrap of a bus. Well, you go back and tell him he'll have to murder me before he'll destroy the evidence I've got against him!"

"Don't think he won't," the voice said menacingly. "Now listen, Everett, you're just acting like a dumb fool! We've got pineapples here. Big ones. We're giving you five minutes to hand over that check. Come out nice, and nothing will happen."

"Suppose I don't?" Everett said.

"If you're not out of there in five minutes we toss the pineapples! We mean to get that check and nothing's going to stop us!"

Everett's mind raced desperately. He leaned over the phone, made his voice sound frightened, whining.

"I got to think this over," he stalled. "You're giving me only five minutes. Can't you make it ten?"

"Nothing doing. Five minutes. No more, no less."

"But . . ." Everett protested.

The line clicked dead in his ear.

Quickly he fumbled out the nickel, dropped in in the slot. He rattled the hook. "Operator! Operator!"

His eyes went wide. He listened, painful realization spreading itself over his tortured face.

They had cut the wire!

In the stillness of the little store the clock on the wall ticked away the five minutes.

THE DOOR to the drug store opened. Henry Everett came out listlessly. He removed his coat, and an impromptu dressing laced with adhesive tape hid the wound in his shoulder.

Slowly, with leaden steps, he crossed the street.

The two men crouched in the doorway lifted their pistols cautiously at his approach.

"No tricks, now!" one of them warned in a hoarse whisper. "We got you covered, and we'd just as soon blow the top of your head off! Where is it? Quick!"

Henry Everett held out his hand lifelessly.

One of the men stepped forward snatched the check from Everett's listless fingers. Swiftly he examined it by the yellow radiance of a street light.

"It's it, all right, Bill!" He turned to Everett. "Okay, chump. You can go now. By rights I owe you one for that clip you give my partner, but I guess this evens it up!" He waved the check. "Wait a minute. Maybe you'd like to see something!"

Everett's eyes moved to the gun in the other man's hand. The gun was lined steadily on Everett's chest. The druggist turned back to the first thug.

The thug had brought out a paper packet of matches. While Everett watched the man struck a match, touched it to the edge of the check.

When there was nothing left of the check but a flaky bit of black tinder, the man ground it under his heel, turned to Everett.

"Okay, chump. Now you can tell anybody you like you saw that check. And try and prove it!"

Everett hung his head. He was still standing there dispiritedly when the men got into a black touring car up the street and drove off.

Then Henry Everett walked slowly back inside his little store to develop the pictures he had taken of the check with a camera and equipment taken from stock in those last minutes—pictures of the check that were to be evidence that sent Big Tim Fahey to the chair for murder!

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THE TREASURE IN THE FOREST

by H. G. WELLS

TIME: Last Century

PLACE: An island near Malay

Evans and Hooker had obtained that treasure map from Chang-hi and his fellow Chinese, and the life of a Chinese was not considered sacred, like that of a European. And now the two adventurers were nearing their goal—but why did Evans dream of Chang-hi grinning?

THE CANOE WAS now approaching the land. The bay opened out, and a gap in the white surf of the reef marked where the little river ran out to the sea; the thicker and deeper green of the virgin forest showed its course down the distant hill slope. The forest here came close to the beach. Far beyond, dim and almost cloudlike in texture, rose the mountains, like suddenly frozen waves. The sea was still save for an almost imperceptible swell. The sky blazed.

The man with the carved paddle stopped. "It should be somewhere here," he said. He shipped the paddle and held his arms out straight before him.

"Come and look at this, Evans," he said.

Both men spoke in low tones, and their lips were hard and dry.

The man called Evans came swaying along the canoe until he could look over his companion's shoulder.

The paper had the appearance of a rough map. By much folding it was creased and worn to the pitch of separation, and the second man held the discoloured fragments together where they had parted. On it one could dimly make out, in almost obliterated pencil, the outline of the bay.

"Here," said Evans, "is the reef and here is the gap." He ran his thumb-nail over the chart.

"This curved and twisting line is the river—I could do with a drink now ! "

"You see this dotted line," said the man with the map; "it is a straight line, and runs from the opening of the reef to a clump of palm-trees. The star comes just where it cuts the river. We must mark the place as we go into the lagoon."

"It's queer," said Evans, after a pause, "what these little marks down here are for. It looks like the plan of a house or something; but what all these little dashes, pointing this way, and that, may mean I can't get a notion. And what's the writing? "

"Chinese," said the man with the map.

"Of course ! *He* was a Chineese," said Evans.

"They all were," said the man with the map.

They both sat for some minutes staring at the land, while the canoe drifted slowly. Then Evans looked towards the paddle.

"Your turn with the paddle now, Hooker," said he.

And his companion quietly folded up his map, put it in his pocket, passed Evans carefully, and began to paddle. His movements were languid, like those of a man whose strength was nearly exhausted.

Evans sat with his eyes half closed, watching the frothy break-water of the coral creep nearer and nearer. The sky was like a furnace now, for the sun was near the zenith. Though they were so near the Treasure he did not feel the exaltation he had anticipated. The intense excitement of the struggle for the plan, and the long night voyage from the mainland in the unprovisioned canoe had, to use his own expression, "taken it out of him." He tried

to arouse himself by directing his mind to the ingots the Chinese had spoken of, but it would not rest there; it came back headlong to the thought of sweet water rippling in the river, and to the almost unendurable dryness of his lips and throat. The rhythmic wash of a sea upon the reef was becoming audible now, and it had a pleasant sound in his ears; the water washed along the side of the canoe, and the paddle dripped between each stroke. Presently he began to doze.

HE WAS STILL dimly conscious of the island, but a queer dream texture interwove with his sensations. Once again it was the night when he and Hooker had hit upon the Chinese secret; he saw the moonlit trees, the little fire burning, and the black figures of the three Chinese—silvered on one side by moonlight, and on the other glowing from the firelight—and heard them talking together in pigeon-English—for they came from different provinces. Hooker had caught the drift of their talk first, and had motioned to him to listen.

Fragments of the conversation were inaudible and fragments comprehensible. A Spanish galleon from the Philippines hopelessly aground, and its treasure buried against the day of return, lay in the background of the story; a shipwrecked crew thinned by disease, a quarrel or so, and the needs of discipline, and at last taking to their boats never to be heard of again. Then Chang-hi, only a year since, wandering ashore, had happened upon the ingots hidden for two hundred years, had deserted his junk, and reburied them with infinite toil, single-handed but very safe. He laid great stress on the safety—it was a secret of his. Now he wanted help to return and exhume them. Presently the little map fluttered and the voices sank. A fine story for two stranded British wastrels to hear! Evans' dream shifted to the moment when he had Chang-hi's pigtail in his hand. The life of a Chinese is scarcely sacred like a European's. The cunning little face of Chang-hi, first keen and furious like a startled snake, and then fearful, treacherous and pitiful, became overwhelmingly prominent in the dream.

At the end Chang-hi had grinned, a most incomprehensible and startling grin. Abruptly things became very unpleasant, as they

will do at times in dreams. Chang-hi gibbered and threatened him. He saw in his dream heaps and heaps of gold, and Chang-hi intervening and struggling to hold him back from it. He took Chang-hi by the pigtail—how big the brute was, and how he struggled and grinned! He kept growing bigger, too. Then the bright heaps of gold turned to a roaring furnace, and a vast devil, surprisingly like Chang-hi, but with a huge black tail, began to feed him with coals. They burnt his mouth horribly. Another devil was shouting his name: "Evans, Evans, you sleepy fool!"—or was it Hooker?

HE WOKE UP. They were in the mouth of the lagoon.

"There are the three palm-trees. It must be in a line with that clump of bushes," said his companion. "Mark that. If we go to those bushes and then strike into the bush in a straight line from here, we shall come to it when we come to the stream."

They could see now where the mouth of the stream opened out. At the sight of it Evans revived. "Hurry up, man," he said, "Or by heaven I shall have to drink sea water!" He gnawed his hand and stared at the gleam of silver among the rocks and green tangle.

Presently he turned almost fiercely upon Hooker. "Give *me* the paddle," he said.

So they reached the river mouth. A little way up Hooker took some water in the hollow of his hand, tasted it, and spat it out.

A little further he tried again. "This will do," he said, and they began drinking eagerly.

"Curse this!" said Evans, suddenly. "It's too slow." And, leaning dangerously over the fore part of the canoe, he began to suck up the water with his lips.

Presently they made an end of drinking, and, running the canoe into a little creek, were about to land among the thick growth that overhung the water.

"We shall have to scramble through this to the beach to find our bushes and get the line to the place," said Evans.

"We had better paddle round," said Hooker.

So they pushed out again into the river and paddled back down it to the sea, and along the shore to the place where the clump of

bushes grew. Here they landed, pulled the light canoe far up the beach, and then went up towards the edge of the jungle until they could see the opening of the reef and the bushes in a straight line. Evans had taken a native implement out of the canoe. It was L-shaped, and the transverse piece was armed with polished stone. Hooker carried the paddle. "It is straight now in this direction," said he; "we must push through this till we strike the stream. Then we must prospect."

THEY PUSHED THROUGH a close tangle of reeds, broad fronds, and young trees, and at first it was toilsome going, but very speedily the trees became larger and the ground beneath them opened out. The blaze of the sunlight was replaced by insensible degrees by cool shadow. The trees became at last vast pillars that rose up to a canopy of greenery far overhead. Dim white flowers hung from their stems, and rosy creepers swung from tree to tree. The shadow deepened. On the ground, blotched fungi and a red-brown incrustation became frequent.

Evans shivered. "It seems almost cold here after the blaze outside."

"I hope we are keeping to the straight," said Hooker.

Presently they saw, far ahead, a gap in the sombre darkness where white shafts of hot sunlight smote into the forest. There also was brilliant green undergrowth, and colored flowers. Then they heard the rush of water.

"Here is the river. We should be close to it now," said Hooker.

The vegetation was thick by the river bank. Great plants, as yet unnamed, grew among the roots of the big trees, and spread rosettes of huge green fans towards the strip of sky. Many flowers and a creeper with shiny foliage clung to the exposed stems. On the water of the broad, quiet pool which the treasure seekers now overlooked there floated big oval leaves and a waxen, pinkish-white flower not unlike a water lily. Further, as the river bent away from them, the water suddenly frothed and became noisy in a rapid.

"Well?" said Evans.

"We have swerved a little from the straight," said Hooker. "That was to be expected."

He turned and looked into the dim cool shadows of the silent

forest behind them. "If we beat a little way up and down the stream we should come to something."

"You said . . ." began Evans.

"*He* said there was a heap of stones," said Hooker.

The two men looked at each other for a moment.

"Let us try a little downstream first," said Evans.

THEY ADVANCED SLOWLY, looking curiously about them. Suddenly Evans stopped. "What the devil's that?" he said.

Hooker followed his finger. "Something blue," he said. It had come into view as they topped a gentle swell of the ground. Then he began to distinguish what it was.

He advanced suddenly with hasty steps, until the body that belonged to the limp hand and arm had become visible. His grip tightened on the implement he carried. The thing was the figure lying on his face. The abandon of the pose was unmistakable.

The two men drew closer together, and stood staring silently at this ominous dead body. It lay in a clear space among the trees. Nearby was a spade after the Chinese pattern, and further off lay a scattered heap of stones, close to a freshly dug hole.

"Somebody has been here before," said Hooker, clearing his throat.

Then suddenly Evans began to swear and rave, and stamp upon the ground.

Hooker turned white but said nothing. He advanced towards the prostrate body. He saw the neck was puffed and purple, and the hands and ankles swollen. "Pah!" he said, and suddenly turned away and went towards the excavation. He gave a cry of surprise. He shouted to Evans, who was following him slowly.

"You fool! It's all right. It's here still." Then he turned again and looked at the dead Chinese, and then again at the hole.

EVANS HURRIED TO the hole. Already half exposed by the ill-fated wretch beside them lay a number of dull yellow bars. He bent down in the hole, and, clearing off the soil with his bare hands, hastily pulled one of the heavy masses out. As he did so a little thorn pricked his hand. He pulled the delicate spike out with fingers and lifted the ingot.

Only gold or lead could weigh like this," he said exultantly.

Hooker was still looking at the dead Chinaman. He was puzzled.

"He stole a march on his friends," he said at last.

"He came here alone, and some poisonous snake has killed him . . . I wonder how he found the place."

Evans stood with ingot in his hands. What did a dead Chinese signify? "We shall have to take this stuff to the mainland piece-meal, and bury it there for a while. How shall we get the canoe?"

He took his jacket off and spread it on the ground, and flung two or three ingots into it. Presently he found that another little thorn had punctured his skin.

"This is as much as we can carry," said he. Then suddenly, with a queer rush of irritation, "What are you staring at?"

Hooker turned to him. "I can't stand . . . him." He nodded towards the corpse. "It's so like . . ."

"Rubbish!" said Evans. "All Chinamen are alike."

Hooker looked into his face. "I'm going to bury *that*, anyhow, before I lend a hand with this stuff."

"Don't be a fool, Hooker," said Evans. "Let that mass of corruption bide."

Hooker hesitated, and then his eye went carefully over the brown soil about them. "It scares me somehow," he said.

"The thing is," said Evans, "what to do with these ingots. Shall we re-bury them over here, or take them across the strait in the canoe?"

HOOKER THOUGHT. His puzzled gaze wandered among the tall tree-trunks, and up into the remote sunlit greenery overhead. He shivered again as his eye rested upon the blue figure of The Chinese. He stared searchingly among the gray depths between the trees.

"What's come to you, Hooker?" said Evans. "Have you lost your wits?"

"Let's get the gold out of this place, anyhow," said Hooker.

He took the ends of the collar of the coat in his hands, and Evans took the opposite corners, and they lifted the mass. "Which way?" said Evans. "To the canoe?"

"It's queer," said Evans, when they had advanced only a few steps, "but my arms ache still with that paddling . . .

"Curse it ! " he said. "But they ache ! I must rest."

They let the coat down. Evans' face was white, and little drops of sweat stood out upon his forehead. "It's stuffy, somehow, in this forest."

Then with an abrupt transition to unreasonable anger: "What is the good of waiting here all the day ? Lend a hand, I say ! You have done nothing but moon since we saw the dead Chinaman."

Hooker was looking steadfastly at his companion's face. He helped raise the coat bearing ingots, and they went forward perhaps a hundred yards in silence. Evans began to breathe heavily. "Can't you speak ? " he said.

"What's the matter with you ? " said Hooker.

Evans stumbled, and then with a sudden curse flung the coat from him. He stood for a moment staring at Hooker, and then with a groan clutched at his own throat.

"Don't come near me, " he said, and went and leant against a tree. Then in a steadier voice, "I'll be better in a minute."

PRESENTLY HIS GRIP upon the trunk loosened, and he slipped slowly down the stem of the tree until he was crumpled heap at its foot. His hands were clenched convulsively. His face became distorted with pain. Hooker approached him.

"Don't touch me ! " said Evans in a stifled voice. "Put the gold back on the coat."

"Can't I do anything for you ? " said Hooker."

"Put the gold back on the coat."

As Hooker handled the ingots he felt a little prick on the ball of his thumb. He looked down and saw a slender thorn, perhaps two inches in length.

Evans gave an inarticulate cry and rolled over.

Hooker's jaw dropped. He stared at the thorn for a moment with dilated eyes. Then he looked at Evans, who was now crumpled together on the ground, his back bending and straitening spasmodically. Then he looked through the pillars of the trees and network of creeper stems, to where in the dim gray shadow the blue-clad body of the Chinese was still indistinctly visible. He thought

of the little dashes in the corner of the plan, and in a moment he understood.

"God help me ! " he said. For the thorns were similiar to those the Dyaks poison and use in their blowing-tubes. He understood now what Chang-hi's assurance of the safety of his treasure meant. He understood that grin now.

"Evans ! " he cried.

But Evans was silent and motionless now, save for a horrible spasmodic twitching of his limbs. A profound silence brooded over the forest.

Then Hooker began to suck furiously at the little pink spot on the ball of his thumb—sucking for dear life. Presently he felt a strange aching pain in his arms and shoulders, and his fingers seemed difficult to bend. Then he knew that sucking was no good.

Abruptly he stopped, and sitting down by the pile of ingots, and resting his chin upon his hands and his elbows upon his knees, stared at the distorted but still stirring body of his companion. Chang-hi's grin came in his mind again. The dull pain spread towards his throat and grew slowly in intensity. Far above him a faint breeze stirred the greener, and the white petals of some unknown flower came floating down through the gloom.



THE STAR THAT STUCK

by RALPH L. CUNNINGHAM

TIME: When the stagecoach still ran at Cactus City

PLACE: The Old West

Billy Merkel had been a good lawman—no one denied that. But the old cuss was a nuisance now, trying to make a comeback and show folks around Cactus City that he wasn't useless yét. What galled Sheriff Anse Buckley was that Billy was so sure he knew how to capture the Lone Wolf—something that Buckley and his deputies hadn't managed to accomplish ye

IT WAS HOT; unusually so, even for Cactus City. From a brassy-looking sky the sun blistered down upon the two short rows of false-fronts comprising the little

cowtown, and upon the shimmering trail of alkali dust which lay in between. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, Cactus City's usual siesta hour, and the only sign of

life visible in the town proper, was a pair of cow-ponies dozing patiently at the hitchrack in front of the Mecca department store.

Out near the edge of the mesquite flat which fringed the place on the west a lone horseman was approaching, jogging slowly along upon an ancient-looking dun. The rider was a lank, gray-haired oldtimer, humped forward in the saddle like a buzzard, one hand dangling listlessly at his side while the other held loose-swung reins.

Of its own accord the cayuse came to a stop in the shade of a friendly cottonwood overhanging the trail in front of the Cactus City-Gold Gulch Stage office, and the rider, evidently glad of the respite, shoved back his battered hat and mopped perspiration from his forehead with the back of his shirt sleeve.

From the open door of his little ten-by-twelve office, Sheriff Anse Buckley watched the newcomer's approach, the scowl which had at first settled over his sunburned face gradually changing to a grin. Anse took the gilt-banded cigar from his mouth and spat with unerring aim square into a knot-hole in the rough board sidewalk before him.

"I knew something would happen to make this a perfect day," he said, grinning, as he swung around in the door. "Here

comes old Billy Merkel, hunting himself a job as usual! How in Sam Hill an I goin' to get rid o' that old cuss, Pinky? He's been in here an average of three times a week, goin' on two months, pesterin' me, and now that he's heard about Slim Bradley quittin', I reckon I won't get no rest at all!"

Pinky Cowan, Anse's husky young top deputy, swung his spurred heels from tabletop to floor and laid aside the crumpled newspaper he had been reading. A wide grin wrinkled his freckled face.

"Might try kiote-poison, Anse. He's a tough old codger but mebbe it would work. Why not get hard-boiled and tell him right out flat-footed that there ain't any job for him here—and ain't likely to be?"

"Hard-boiled?" grunted Anse, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Shucks, I've done everything but throw him out o' the office bodily!"

ANSE TURNED again and watched the oldtimer. He had drawn up at the hitchrack across the trail and was fastening his cayuse. A moment later he came ambling over and entered the office.

"Howdy, Anse--'lo, Pinky," he greeted affably, pulling out a chair and making himself at home. "Just happened to drift into town t'-day and thought I'd drop round and see..."

"Now wait a minute, Billy!" Anse cut in with asperity, holding up a hand and stopping him. "There's no use o' you houndin' me for a job because I ain't goin' to give you one! In the first place . . ."

"But listen, Anse, I—I . . ."

"No use to argue, Billy. I know what you're goin' to say, so there's no use repeatin' it. You're goin' to start in and tell me what a dang good sheriff you used to be, twenty-three years back—how you plumb terrorized the outlaws when this country was a frontier. I've heard that a couple dozen times already—and I'm agreein' with you. You sure smoked 'em up! But that's no reason I'm goin' to give you a job now. To begin with, you're too old an . . ."

"Old? Too old?" snorted Billy indignantly at Anse as though he doubted if he had heard aright. "Are you talkin' about *me*, Anse?"

"W-e-l-l," grinned Anse, with a wink on the side at Pinky, "mebbe you ain't exactly gettin' old, but you've got to admit you ain't quite as spry as you used to be. You see it's like this, Billy. The kind of deputies this office has to have is youngsters—young, active men that can snap around and do things. Supposin' I *was* to give you a job—which I haven't got any intention o' doin'—and you was to meet with some o' these hombres that have been rustlin' down in the

Basin country—wh then? Or suppose you were to meet up with a crook like this gent callin' himself the Lone Wolf? You couldn't . . ."

"The Lone Wolf?" snorted Billy, deprecatingly. "Anse, the first thing I'd do would be to round up that cuss! And while you're talkin' about youngsters snappin' around and doin' things. I don't notice that any o' you have collected up on the thousand dollars reward that's offered for him. Been a year or more now since he started operatin' in these parts—been robbin' stores and banks and stickin' up stages till you've plumb lost track o' the number o' times! Shucks, when I was sheriff o' this county I'd have . . ."

"Uh-huh. I know what you'd have done," agreed Anse with another wink at Pinky. "You'd have gone right out and gobbled him up! Most likely you'd have landed on him all spraddled out and . . ."

"I wouldn't have done any such a dern thing. But I'd have used my head a little, huntin' him." This sarcastically. "Didn't it ever strike you as kind o' strange the way the Lone Wolf operates, Anse?"

"Strange? Sure it does! He's the slickest crook that ever looked through the sights of a forty-five. And as plumb elusive as a sand lizard. He's . . ."

"I didn't mean that. Didn't it ever strike you as kind o' queer that the Lone Wolf seems to know

right when it's the best time to loot a store, or the stage, or even the banks o' this county? Don't it seem kind o' funny to you that he didn't show up the night you and Slim Bradley laid for him in the stage comin' down from Gold Gulch, when Sad Smith was supposed to be haulin' a month's clean-up from the mine?"

Anse's face flushed and he shot a quick look at Billy. A recollection of that misplaced strategy of his, and the laugh that had gone up all over the county at his expense, was none too pleasant. But he found no sign of levity upon the oldtimer's weather-beaten countenance.

"Well, what about it?" he demanded belligerently. "What's that got to do with it?"

Old Billy stared at him and shook his head. "My gosh, don't you see anything significant about that?"

"What are you drivin' at, anyhow, Billy?" scowled Anse. "I suppose you're hintin' that the Lone Wolf is someone right here in Cactus? Mebbe *me*—or Pinky, here—or someone we're 'rubbin' elbows with every day?"

"Didn't it ever strike you like that, Anse?"

"Billy, you're plumb loco! Do you happen to know that more than one person in this county has seen the Lone Wolf's face? I reckon you've forgotten the time

young Graham grabbed the bandanna off his face—in front of several passengers on the stage—and got drilled for his trouble?"

Billy shook his head doubtfully.

"Mebbe," he admitted. "But just the same there's something queer goin' on—there's no doubt about that in my mind."

"There's something queer going on all right," Anse agreed sarcastically. "But it's goin' on right where your doubt is, Billy—right in your mind!"

And with that he dropped into his swivel chair at the desk and refused to discuss the matter further.

IT WAS NO surprise to Billy Merkle when he learned, a day or two later, that Anse had given the deputy job to Clem Gerber, a young puncher who had been riding for the big 77 Ranch, just south of town. Billy had rather been expecting that from the start.

Clem, a husky young giant, had been in the Cactus City district for some little time, evidently awaiting just such an opening as that presented by Slim Bradley's resignation. He certainly was a likely-looking youngster who seemed to possess all the requirements of a first-class deputy, and notwithstanding that he had no previous experience in a sheriff's office, Billy could find no fault with Anse's choice.

Yet ole Billy himself had wanted that job as he had never before yearned for anything in his life. His hankering to once more wear a 'badge of office had become nothing short of an ache. It wasn't because he needed the hundred a month that the job paid; it was more a matter of sentiment with him. He wanted to show folks around Cactus City that he wasn't yet for the discard, as some of them seemed to think. He wanted to show them that he still possessed the ability to "come back"

Also, Billy had ideas of his own concerning the operations of the outlaw calling himself the Lone Wolf, idea which he considered well worth bearing in mind in the futile hunt that was being made for the bandit. And this notwithstanding Anse Buckley's ridicule. There were a lot of things about the Lone Wolf's activities which looked mighty strange to the old-timer.

"It's a derned queer coincidence that that cuss knows right when the time is ripe to swoop down on the banks and stages and stores o' this county," he mused, sitting, a few days later, upon an up-ended box in the shade of the Mecca store, pondering matters.

"Three times, nand-runnin', he's stood up the stage when Sad Smith was bringin' the mine clean-up down from Gold Gulch. No one was supposed to know about them shipments. Then there's the time he

looted the bank here in Cactus. How did he happen to know that the Hashknife outfit had made a spot-cash deal for their steers and that the money was layin' there in the bank's safe? If that's a coincidence, then it's a derned queer one — that's all I got tuh say!"

Early that morning he had seen Clem Gerber come out of the sheriff's office with a shiny new star pinned to his shirt front. Clem had mounted his horse and headed up Gold Gulch trail. An hour later Pinky Cowan came out, swung into the saddle and started at a brisk gallop in the direction of the bleak country to the north known as the badlands. Now, through the open door of Anse's office, he could see the sheriff sitting at the desk, pen in hand, evidently filling out some sort of a legal paper. Billy got up and ambled leisurely over.

To his surprise Anse seemed to be in an unusually jubilant frame of mind that day. He laid down his pen and swung around in his creaking swivel chair, greeting the oldtimer with a wide grin.

"Well, how's tricks, Billy? I reckon me and you are friends again, now that you've given up that fool notion o' wantin' to be a deputy?"

"I ain't given it up, Anse," Billy soberly stated.

"Ain't given it up? Billy, you're the stubbornest old codger I ever

met up with! Alongside o' you a mule is plumb reasonable! What are you aimin' to do about it?"

"I'm doin' a little investigatin' on my own hook, Anse. I got a notion that . . ."

"A notion that the Lone Wolf is mebbe one of our leadin' citizens, huh?" Anse cut in deprecatingly. "Trouble with you, Billy, is that you been readin' too many novels! Too much mystery stuff, I reckon. As I tried to point out to you the other day, a lot of people around here have seen the Lone Wolf's face. I reckon they'd know whether he's someone we're all acquainted with or not. How in . . ."

"But how come he always seems to know when it's the best time to stick up the stage?" insisted Billy.

Anse shrugged his shoulders and squinted at the oldtimer in supreme exasperation.

"My gosh, you keep talkin' about that like it amounted to something!" he growled. "There's nothin' strange about it! The stage hauls the mine clean-up every few weeks. The stores always have a pretty big surplus o' cash on hand—likewise the banks. Anybody could . . ."

"But don't it seem queer that . . ."

"No, it don't!" interrupted Anse with finality. "The Lone Wolf is a mighty slick crook and that's all there is to it! We haven't had much luck trailin' him—I'm willin'

to admit that—but that's no sign we won't get him. I don't mind tellin' you that right now Pinky is trailin' down a straight tip that was phoned to me this mornin' from Bear Creek. A sheepherder up that way accidentally stumbled on a camp in the badlands that looked suspicious, and watchin' it last night he saw a hombre ride in that tallies exactly with the Lone Wolf. If you'll drop round here this evenin'," he added sarcastically, "mebbe we can convince you that the Lone Wolf is no one you know!"

IT WAS STILL early afternoon, so Billy resumed his seat in the shade of the Mecca store. Later in the day he ate his dinner at the Maverick Cafe and then wandered back to the sheriff's office. He found the place locked, but hearing sounds coming from the little square jail building to the rear he sauntered toward it. There he found Anse busily sweeping out the place.

"Gettin' the old calaboose ready for the Lone Wolf?" he queried, perching himself on a cell stool and grinning good-naturedly at the sheriff.

"Sure am!" Anse declared vehemently. "I ain't heard from Pinky yet, but I'm bettin' he gets his man. Mebbe Pinky ain't as long on deep thinkin' as some folks I know," he added with a

grin, "but he's sure hell for action! If that sheepherder's tip is worth anything—and I'm inclined to think it is—you can bet your bottom dollar that the Lone Wolf will do his bunkin' tonight right here in the hoosegow!"

Evidently there was a lot more confidence in Anse's tone than he really felt, for he kept squinting anxiously off to the north, where the trail came out of the badlands. Suddenly he straightened, his eyes fastened upon the low ridge of broken buttes that marked the end of the mesa. There, faintly discernible against the horizon, he could make out a tiny wisp of dust that arose and moved slowly toward. He watched it eagerly until two horsemen came into view and then he hurried to his office and got a pair of powerful field-glasses. For a breathless minute he squinted through them and with a whoop of triumph shoved them into Billy's hand.

"Look! Look!" he shouted, grabbing the oldtimer's arm in a grip that made the latter wince. "It's him; sure as shootin'! It's Pinky Cowan—and I'm a horned toad if he ain't bringin' in the Lone Wolf!"

Anse did everything but dance and yodel in his delight over the unbelievable good fortune of his young deputy. He hardly gave Billy a chance to study the men. But one glimpse was enough for

the oldtimer. His jaw sagged as he recognized Pinky, proudly erect in the saddle, herding in a dark-featured man that could be none other than the Lone Wolf. There was no doubt about it—Pinky had got his man!

"It's them," old Billy muttered simply, his visions of a shiny deputy star fading with the approach of the men. "I reckon you got an up-and-comin' deputy there, Anse—one that can sure snap around and do things!"

WITH THE Lone Wolf locked safely in the little frame calaboose, Anse spent the rest of the day strutting proudly about telling the crowd which had gathered in his office the details of the outlaw's capture.

Pinky, following the sheepherder's tip, had ridden directly to the isolated canyon in the heart of the badlands, where he located the outlaw's camp, and had there concealed himself to await the Lone Wolf's coming. This had occurred shortly before noon. The young deputy, eager and a trifle overconfident, had stepped out of his hiding place and covered his man, only to have the other whirl upon him, knock the gun from his hand, and engage him in a terrific hand-to-hand struggle.

The fight had been fast and furious; so much so that its details were hazy even to Pinky. But after

a quarter-of-an hour's struggle he had succeeded in landing a blow upon the outlaw's jaw which effectually silenced him. Then he trussed the outlaw up, tied him to his horse, and brought him in to Cactus.

Pinky, his face as embarrassed-looking as a schoolboy's over his sudden popularity, sat in the corner of the room with Clem Gerber, the cynosure of the boys' admiring eyes. He had little to say, modestly claiming that Anse, or Clem, or anyone else could have done the same under similar circumstances.

As for old Billy Merkel, he sat hunched in a corner of the room, unnoticed by all, his faded blue eyes staring curiously out from under his hat brim at the circle of faces around him.

"I knew we'd get him," Anse proudly told the boys for the hundredth time. "He was a mighty slippery crook, and he dodged us a dozen times in the past year, right when we thought we had him. There's been a lot of kickin' goin' on because we didn't corral him sooner, and there's been a lot o' fool criticism of this office by folks that seem to think they know more about huntin' outlaws than we do." He paused and glanced briefly at Billy.

"There's folks locoed enough even to think that this Lone Wolf hombre was someone in touch with

things right here in town—some-one usin' his knowledge to stage these hold-ups. But the Lone Wolf, a stranger to us all, is in jail, caught with some o' the goods right on him. I reckon that's the proof o' the puddin'!"

The boys seemed to know exactly to whom Anse was alluding in the latter part of his statement and smiles crossed their faces as they glanced in old Billy's direction. But the oldtimer ignored the sheriff's remarks as completely as though he hadn't heard them. Eyes riveted to the floor, his weather-beaten face was as inscrutable as a leather mask.

An hour later, when everyone had departed and Anse locked his office up for the night, the old fellow slunk off by himself in the darkness to hunt his favorite perch on the empty packing box in the shadow of the Mecca store. And there he sat, apparently lost to the world, his chin resting in the palm of his hand, pondering matters.

TEN O'CLOCK, as usual, found the little town sleeping. With the single exception of a faint yellow glow coming through the barred windows of the jail building, the place was as dark as a bear's den. By the illumination Billy could see two figures moving about inside; one of them the guard Anse Buckley had posted, the other the Lone Wolf.

Every now and then the outlaw came over to the window of the jail and stared into the gloom, sometimes muttering to himself and cursing his evil fortune in landing him there.

Along toward eleven o'clock a belated moon poked its rim over the rugged buttes to the east, bathing the mesa, through filmy clouds, in a soft white light. But still old Billy sat upon his box as motionless as a statue. The outlaw continued pacing about, as restless as a caged animal, but for more than an hour the guard had not moved. Sprawled in a chair, with legs stretched out and hat pulled low over his eyes against the glow of the kerosene lamp, he evidently was fast asleep.

Old Billy stirred and turned up his shirt collar. As usual, with the coming of night, the desert air had grown raw and chilly; already it had begun to pervade the old man's thin clothing. He was about to slide down from his seat when the sharp click of metal upon stone somewhere off in the darkness made him sit upright and stare searchingly into the gloom. The sound was a familiar one. It was made by the shod hoof of a horse striking a rock in the bumpy, rough trail.

The moon, now completely obscured by clouds, shed but a feeble, eerie light over the desert, casting deep shadows between the build-

ings. Billy, trying to penetrate the darkness, fancied the sound had come from farther up the trail, from somewhere to the rear of the buildings beyond Anse Buckley's office. He slid quietly to the ground in the deeper shadows and waited, straining his ears.

Again, after a moment, the sound came to him; this time closer. Squinting expectantly, he at last beheld the shadowy outlines of a man approaching, leading a horse. From time-to-time he stopped, head erect, apparently listening. When he arrived in the shadows of the sheriff's office he left the horse and came quickly afoot to the side of the jail.

A few hastily-muttered words passed between him and the prisoner and then he passed quickly around to the front of the building. He stood there a moment looking in upon the sleeping guard.

OLD BILLY, cautiously feeling his way along his sheltering wall, made good use of that brief moment. Sliding noiselessly from his hiding place at a crouching run, he gained the shadow at the side of the sheriff's office where the prowler had left his horse. There he straightened out against the wall to await developments. The old fellow scarcely breathed as the man came in his direction, passed within five feet of him, and approached the horse. Then, as

the other stopped almost within arm's reach to listen once more, Billy thought his heartbeats would surely be heard.

But evidently the prowler was too engrossed with the business in hand to suspect that he was being watched. In the shadow of the building he quickly uncoiled a lariat, fastened its end securely to the horn of the saddle, and unwinding the rope as he walked, made his way back to the cell window.

Again a few guarded words passed between him and the prisoner, and the end of the lariat was passed up between the bars.

"Around the middle ones," gruffly instructed the man on the ground as the other prepared to make the rope fast, "and loop it tight! One yank and they'll come out o' them rotten boards like snaggin' a tooth!"

A muttered reply came from the man above and old Billy's heart pounded. Waiting only until the prowler started around the front of the building again, evidently to make sure that the guard still slept, he glided toward the pony. It was close-hitched to a post at the side of the building, a thin strand of rope round its muzzle to keep it from whinnying; two circumstances for which he was duly grateful.

He fumbled there in the darkness a moment, meanwhile stroking the pony's neck and muttering

softly to it, and then just as the man rounded the corner of the jail he slid back up against the building.

Without pausing, the man came directly toward the horse, unfastened it, and led it quickly to the cell window, meanwhile gathering up the rope. With one end now securely fastened to the bars, the other looped around his saddle horn, he dropped the slack to the ground and mounted.

"Ready?" he queried in an undertone.

"Ready!" came the grunted response from above.

Backing the horse close to the jail, the rider paused a split second and then dug spurs deeply in. Like a rocket the startled cayuse flashed forward. With the speed of a cannonball it raced to the end of the rope; then a queer thing happened. Came the tearing crash of wood as the rotted boards yielded the iron bars. Suddenly, so suddenly that it looked as though he had been catapulted from a gun, the rider shot into the air, saddle, stirrups and cinches flying after him, to turn a complete somersault and come down face-first not three feet from where old Billy was standing!

But as startingly sudden as it all had happened, Billy Merkel acted quicker. With surprising agility the old fellow sprang. Long arm outstretched, he landed in

one bound upon the fallen horseman, snatched the gun from the latter's holster and whirled to the jail.

The bars were not completely torn out, but they were sufficiently loosened to permit the Lone Wolf to squeeze through—and he was losing no time in making his exit.

With leg and shoulder already protruding, he was wriggling and frantically squirming to gain his freedom when the gun in old Billy's hand roared. Like a sudden clap of thunder it crashed out upon the midnight stillness of the peacefully sleeping little cowtown. The bullet struck a twisted bar near the outlaw's face, showering him with splinters and spattering him with lead. He emitted one frightened oath and tumbled headlong back into the safety of his cell.

OLD BILLY glanced at the wrenched bars of the window and then at the man on the ground. The latter had been knocked completely out; he lay as still as a corpse. Billy raised his gun and sent three shots into the air to arouse the town and then calmly squatted on his haunches beside the fallen horseman.

He had not long to wait. The jail door slammed, and the guard came around the corner rubbing his eyes and demanding to know what the racket was about. Lights began blinking in cabin windows

and in a minute or two a dozen men were hurrying toward the jail with lanterns.

Anse Buckley, closely followed by Pinky Cown, the latter still climbing into his clothes, were first to arrive. Anse stared open-mouthed from the wrecked jail window to the old-timer's face.

"What's going 'on?" he demanded, now fully awake and beginning to grasp the situation. "Who did the shootin'—and what happened to those bars?"

"I did the shootin'," Billy answered quietly, a little pride in his voice. "A party tried t' stage a jail-break and I happened along just in time to prevent it."

"A jail-break?" roared the sheriff. "Who tried it?"

Old Billy's eyes dropped to the man on the ground, who was beginning to show signs of life.

"Better take a look yourself, Anse—I reckon you know him"

Anse muttered impatiently and moved toward the man. The latter was by now sufficiently recovered to shower the sheriff with a string of vituperative oaths as Anse roughly turned him over on his back. Then the sheriff straightened up in amazement. He acted as though he couldn't believe his eyes. The white, defiant face that gazed up at him was that of his newly-appointed deputy, Clem Gerber.

"Billy, are—are you sure there

ain't some mistake about this?" he stuttered, looking doubtfully at the oldtimer.

"I wish there was, Anse," and there was a ring of sincerity in the old man's voice. "But there ain't a chance! He hitched his lass-robe to the bars and hooked the other end to his saddle horn, aimin' to yank the bars out. Bein' unarmed, the only way I could stop him was to loosen his saddle cinches, which I did. And there he is, right where he lit!"

AN HOUR LATER, when Anse and Pinky had locked the Lone Wolf and young Gerber in secure cells, they returned to their office. There they found old Billy seated as calmly in Anse's swivel chair as though nothing unusual had occurred. Anse looked at him sharply, his face wrinkled in its deepest scowl.

"How come you 'happened' to be up so late tonight, Billy?" he wanted to know. "How come you 'happened' along just in time to prevent that jail-break?"

"Well, t' tell the truth, Anse, I didn't just 'happen' along," the old fellow confessed, a grin spreading over his leathery face. "I had a—well—a sort o' hunch that something was goin' t' happen so I waited round, watchin'. You know I been tryin' t' tell you all along that I figgered someone right here in Cactus was the Lone Wolf,

or someone in mighty close touch with him? I . . ."

"I know all about that," Anse interrupted hastily, "go on with your story."

"Well, when Pinky brought that cuss in, it left only one way t' figger it, so I begun watchin' faces. That was in your office tonight, Anse, while you was talkin'. And you sure missed it when you didn't notice Ciem Gerber's! When he came back from Gold Gulch and found out that the Lone Wolf was corralled, you' thought he'd seen a ghost!

"That settled it for me. It made the whole matter plumb clear. Clem's been hanging around your office upward of a year now, pretendin' t' be awaitin' an openin'. All that time he's been tippin' off things to the Lone Wolf, includin' the plans you made for corrallin' him!

"I knew he'd never leave his pardner in jail—not if there was any way o' gettin' him out—so the rest was plumb easy, or would o' been if I hadn't plumb forgot my gun tonight. I reckon I'll have to find some way o' joggin' up this derned mem'ry o' mine if I aim . . ."

But Anse was no longer listening to him. He was staring curiously at a star pinned to the oldtimer's suspender trap.

"Where'd you get that?" he

demanded, scowling deeper than ever. "That looks like . . ."

"It is," Billy affirmed with a grin, gently polishing the insignia of office with his shirt sleeve. "It was issued by Sheriff Anse Buckley, of Geronimo County, Arizona. I picked it up in the trail where it fell off a hombre that was tryin' t' stage a jail-break. I was sort o' hopin' that mebbe . . ."

He paused and looked expectantly at Anse. The sheriff's scowl relaxed and he turned, undecided, to Pinky.

"I reckon we'd better let him keep it, Anse," grinned the latter. "From the way he's got it double-

cinched to his suspender-strap I reckon it'd never fall off, like it did from Clem. Anyhow, it mightn't be a bad idea to hire brains, 'stead o' brawn, for that deputy job. Billy's gettin' a little old but . . ."

"Well," grunted Anse reflectively, "mebbe—but let's let the whole thing go over till mornin'. It's gettin' late and I want to get some sleep. Drop by in the mornin', Billy, and you and me and Pinky will talk things over. It might be that . . ."

Billy was there in the morning. Early, too. And that star is still pinned to his suspender strap.



ON THE CITY WALL

by RUDYARD KIPLING

TIME: The 1880's

PLACE: Indio

Riot and mutiny was never farther than just around the corner here, and the big religious holidays—Hindu or Muslim—were occasions for an outbreak, as the rival sects clashed. For though the British ruled wisely and well for the most part, there still were those who dreamed of former times, before the white Sahibs come . . .

Then she let them down by a cord through the window; for her house was upon the town-wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. —JOSHUA II. 15

LALUN IS A member of the most ancient profession in the world. Lilith was her very-great-grandmamma, and that was before the days of Eve as every one knows. In the West, people say rude things about Lalun's profession, and write lectures about it and distribute the lectures to young persons in order that Morality may be preserved. In the East where the profession is hereditary, descending from mother to daughter, nobody writes lectures or takes

any notice; and that is a distinct proof of the inability of the East to manage its own affairs.

Lalun's real husband, for even ladies of Lalun's profession in the East must have husbands, was a big jujube-tree. Her Mamma, who had married a fig-tree, spent ten thousand rupees on Lalun's wedding, which was blessed by forty-seven clergymen of Mamma's church, and distributed five thousand rupees in charity to the poor. And that was the custom of the land. The advantages of having a jujube-tree for a husband are obvious. You cannot hurt his feelings, and he looks imposing.

Lalun's husband stood on the plain outside the City walls, and Lalun's house was upon the east wall facing the river. If you fell from the broad window-seat you dropped thirty feet sheer into the City Ditch. But if you stayed where you should and looked forth, you saw all the cattle of the City being driven down to water, the students of the Government College playing cricket, the high grass and trees that fringed the river-bank, the great sand bars that ribbed the river, the red tombs of dead Emperors beyond the river, and very far away through the blue heat-haze, a glint of the snows of the Himalayas.

Wali Dad used to lie in the window-seat for hours at a time watching this view. He was a young Muhammadan who was suffering acutely from education of the English variety and knew it. His father had sent him to a Mission-school to get wisdom, and Wali Dad had absorbed more than ever his father or the Missionaries intended he should. When his father died, Wali Dad was independent and spent two years experimenting with the creeds of the Earth and reading books that are of no use to anybody.

After he had made an unsuccessful attempt to enter the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian fold at the same time (the Missionaries found him out and called him names, but they did not understand his trouble), he discovered Lalun on the City wall and became the most constant of her admirers. He possessed a head that English artists at home would rave over and paint amid impossible surroundings—a face that female novelists would use with delight through nine hundred pages. In reality he was only a cleanbred young Muhammadan, with pencilled eyebrows, small-cut nostrils, little feet and hands, and a very tired look in his eyes. By virtue of

his twenty-two years he had grown a neat black beard which he stroked with pride and kept delicately scented. His life seemed to be divided between borrowing books from men and making love to Lalun in the window-seat. He composed songs about her, and some of the songs are sung to this day in the City from the Street of the Mutton-Butchers to the Copper-Smiths' ward.

One song, the prettiest of all, says that the beauty of Lalun was so great that it troubled the hearts of the British Government and caused them to lose their peace of mind. That is the way the song is sung in the streets; but, if you examine it carefully and know the key to the explanation, you will find that there are three puns in it—on "beauty," "heart," and "peace of mind,"—so that it runs: "By the subtlety of Lalun the administration of the Government was troubled and it lost such and such a man." When Wali Dad sings that song his eyes glow like hot coals, and Lalun leans back among the cushions and throws bunches of jasmine-buds at Wali Dad.

BUT FIRST IT IS necessary to explain something about the Supreme Government which is above all and behind all. Gentlemen come from England, spend a few weeks in India, walk round this great Sphinx of the Plains, and write books upon its ways and its works, denouncing or praising it as their own ignorance prompts. Consequently all the world knows how the Supreme Government conducts itself. But no one, not even the Supreme Government, knows everything about the administration of the Empire. Year by year England sends out fresh drafts for the first fighting-line, which is officially called the Indian Civil Service. These die, or kill themselves by overwork, or are worried to death or broken in health and hope in order that the land may be protected from death and sickness, famine and war, and may eventually become capable of standing alone. It will never stand alone, but the idea is a pretty one, and men are willing to die for it, and yearly the work of pushing and coaxing and scolding and petting the country into good living goes forward. If an advance be made all credit is given to the native, while the Englishmen stand back and wipe their foreheads. If a failure occurs the Englishmen step forward and take the blame. Overmuch tenderness of this kind has bred a strong belief among many natives that the native is capable of administering the country, and

many devout Englishmen believe this also, because the theory is stated in beautiful English with all the latest political color.

There be other men who, though uneducated, see visions and dream dreams, and they, too, hope to administer the country in their own way—that is to say, with a garnish of Red Sauce. Such men must exist among two hundred million people, and, if they are not attended to, may cause trouble and even break the great idol called *Pax Britannic*, which, as the newspapers say, lives between Peshawur and Cape Comorin. Were the Day of Doom to dawn tomorrow, you would find the Supreme Government "taking measures to allay popular excitement" and putting guards upon the graveyards that the Dead might troop forth orderly. The youngest Civilian would arrest Gabriel on his own responsibility if the Archangel could not produce a Deputy Commissioner's permission to "make music or other noises" as the license says.

Whence it is easy to see that mere men of the flesh who would create a tumult must fare badly at the hands of the Supreme Government. And they do. There is no outward sign of excitement; there is no knowledge. When due and sufficient reasons have been given, weighed and approved, the machinery moves forward, and the dreamer of dreams and the seer of visions is gone from his friends and following. He enjoys the hospitality of Government; there is no restriction upon his movements within certain limits; but he must not confer any more with his brother dreamers. Once in every six months the Supreme Government assures itself that he is well and takes formal acknowledgement of his existence. No one protests against his detention, because the few people who know about it are in deadly fear of seeming to know him; and never a single newspaper "takes up his case" or organizes demonstrations on his behalf, because the newspapers of India have got behind that lying proverb which says the Pen is mightier than the Sword, and can walk delicately.

So now you know as much as you ought about Wali Dad, the educational mixture, and the Supreme Government.

Lalun has not yet been described. She would need, so Wali Dad says, a thousand pens of gold and ink scented with musk. She has been variously compared to the Moon, the Dil Sagar Lake, a spotted quail, a gazelle, the Sun on the Desert of Kutch, the Dawn, the

Stars, and the young bamboo. These comparisons imply that she is beautiful exceedingly according to the native standards, which are practically the same as those of the West. Her eyes are black and her hair is black, and her eyebrows are black as leeches; her mouth is tiny and says witty things; her hands are tiny and have saved much money; her feet are tiny and have trodden on the naked hearts of many men. But, as Wali Dad sings: "*Lalun is Lalun*, and when you have said that you have only come to the Beginnings of Knowledge."

THE LITTLE HOUSE on the City wall was just big enough to hold Lalun, and her maid, and a pussy-cat with a silver collar. A big pink and blue cut-glass chandelier hung from the ceiling of the reception room. A petty Nawab had given Lalun the horror, and she kept it for politeness' sake. The floor of the room was of polished chunam, white as curds. A latticed window of squabby pluffy cushions and fat carpets everywhere, and Lalun's silver *huga*, studded with turquoises, had a special little carpet all to its shining self. Wali Dad was nearly as permanent a fixture as the chandelier. As I have said, he lay in the window-seat and meditated on Life and Death and Lalun—specially Lalun. The feet of the young men of the City tended to her doorways and then—retired, for Lalun was a particular maiden, slow of speech, reserved of mind, and not in the least inclined to orgies which were nearly certain to end in strife. "If I am of no value, I am unworthy of this honor," said Lalun. "If I am of value, they are unworthy of Me." And that was a crooked sentence.

In the long hot nights of latter April and May all the City seemed to assemble in Lalun's little white room to smoke and to talk. Shi-ahs of the grimmest and most uncompromising persuasion; Sufis who had lost all belief in the Prophet and retained but little in God; wandering Hindu priests passing southward on their way to the Central India fairs and other affairs; Pundits in black gowns, with spectacles on their noses and undigested wisdom in their insides; bearded beadmen of the wards; Sikhs with all the details of the latest ecclesiastical scandal in the Golden Temple; red-eyed priests from beyond the Border, looking like trapped wolves and talking like ravens; M. A.'s of the University, very superior and very voluble

— all these people and more also you might find in the white room. Wali Dad lay in the window-seat and listened to the talk.

"It is Lalun's *salon*," said Wali Dad to me, "and it is eclectic — is not that the word? Outside of a Freemason's Lodge I have never seen such gatherings."

"But what in the world do all these men do?" I asked.

"The curse of our country," said Wali Dad. "They talk. It is like the Athenians—always hearing and telling some new thing. Ask the Pearl and she will show you how much she knows of the news of the City and the Province. Lalun knows everything."

"Lalun," I said at random—she was talking to a gentleman of the Kurd persuasion who had come in from God-knows-where—"when does the 175th Regiment go to Agra?"

"It does not go at all," said Lalun, without turning her head. "They have ordered the 118th to go in its stead. That Regiment goes to Lucknow in three months, unless they give a fresh order."

"That is so," said Wali Dad without a shade of doubt. "Can you, with your telegrams and your newspapers, do better? Always hearing and telling some new thing," he went on. "My friend, has your God ever smitten a European nation for gossiping in the bazars? India has gossiped for centuries—always standing in the bazars until the soldiers go by. Therefore—you are here today instead of starving in your own country, and I am not a Muhammadan—I am a Product—a Demnition Product. That also I owe to you and yours: that I cannot make an end to my sentence without quoting from your authors." He pulled at the *huga* and mourned, half feelingly, half in earnest, for the shattered hopes of his youth. Wali Dad was always mourning over something or other—the country of which he despaired, or the creed in which he had lost faith, or the life of the English which he could by no means understand.

Lalun never mourned. She played lute songs on the *sitar*, and to hear her sing, "*O Peacock, cry again*," was always a fresh pleasure. She knew all the songs that have ever been sung, from the war-songs of the South that make the old men angry with the young men and the young men angry with the State, to the love-songs of the North where the swords whinny-whicker like angry kites in the pauses between the kisses, and the Passes fill with armed

men, and the Lover is torn from his Beloved and cries, *Ai, Ai, Ai!* evermore. She knew how to make up tobacco for the *huga* so that it smelt like the Gates of Paradise and wafted you gently through them. She could embroider strange things in gold and silver, and dance softly with the moonlight when it came in at the window. Also she knew the hearts of men, and the heart of the City, and whose wives were faithful and whose untrue, and more of the secrets of the Government Offices than are good to be set down in this place. Nasiban, her maid, said that her jewelry was worth ten thousand pounds, and that, some night, a thief would enter and murder her for its possession; but Lalun said that all the City would tear that thief limb-from-limb, and that he, whoever he was, knew it.

SO SHE TOOK her *sitar* and sat in the window-seat and sang a song of old days that had been sung by a girl of her profession in an armed camp on the eve of a great battle—the day before the Fords of the Jumna ran red and Sivaji fled fifty miles to Delhi with a Toorkh stallion at his horse's tail and another Lalun on his saddle-bow. It was what men called a Mah-ratta *laonee*, and it said:

*Their warrior forces Chimajee
Before the Peishwa led,
The Children of the Sun and Fire
Behind him turned and fled.*

And the chorus said:—

*With them there fought who rides so free
With a sword and turban red,
The warrior-youth who earns his fee
At peril of his head.*

"At peril of his head," said Wali Dad in English to me. "Thanks to your Government, all our heads are protected, and with the educational facilities at my command"—his eyes twinkled wickedly—"I might be a distinguished member of the local administration.

Perhaps, in time, I might even be a member of a Legislative Council."

"Don't speak English," said Lalun, bending over her *sitar* afresh. The chorus went out from the City wall to the blackened wall of Fort Amara which dominates the City. No man knows the precise extent of Fort Amara. Three kings built it hundreds of years ago, and they say that there are miles of underground rooms beneath its walls. It is peopled with many ghosts, a detachment of Garrison Artillery and a Company of Infantry. In its prime it held ten thousand men and filled its ditches with corpses.

"At peril of his head," sang Lalun again and again.

Ahead moved on one of the Ramparts—the gray head of an old man—and a voice, rough as sharkskin on a sword-hilt, sent back the last line of the chorus and broke into a song that I could not understand, though Lalun and Wali Dad listened intently.

"What is it?" I asked. "Who is it?"

"A consistent man," said Wali Dad. "He found you in '46, when he was a warrior-youth; refought you '57, and he tried to fight you in '71, but you had learned the trick of blowing men from guns too well. Now he is old; but he would still fight if he could."

"Is he a Wahabi, then? Why should he answer to a Mahratta *laonee* if he be Wahabi—or Sikh?" said I.

"I do not know," said Wali Dad. "He has lost, perhaps, his religion. Perhaps he wishes to be a King. Perhaps he is a King. I do not know his name."

"That is a lie, Wali Dad. If you know his career you must know his name."

"That is quite true. I belong to a nation of liars. I would rather not tell you his name. Think for yourself."

Lalun finished her song, pointed to the Fort, and said simply: "Khem Singh."

"Hm," said Wali Dad. "If the Pearl chooses to tell you the Pearl is a fool."

I translated to Lalun, who laughed. "I choose to tell what I choose to tell. They kept Khem Singh in Burma," said she. "They kept him there for many years until his mind was changed in him."

So great was the kindness of the Government. Finding this, they sent him back to his own country that he might look upon it before he died. He is an old man, but when he looks upon this country his memory will come. Moreover, there be many who remember him."

"He is an Interesting Survival," said Wali Dad, pulling at the *huga*. "He returns to a country now full of educational and political reform, but, as the Pearl says, there are many who remember him. He was once a great man. There will never be any more great men in India. They will all, when they are boys, go whoring after strange gods, and they will become citizens—fellow-citizens'—'illustrious fellow-citizens.' What is it that the native papers call them?"

WALI DAD SEEMED to be in a very bad temper. Lalun looked out of the window and smiled into the dust-haze. I went away thinking about Khem Singh who had once made history with a thousand followers, and would have been a princeling but for the power of the Supreme Government aforesaid.

The Senior Captain Commanding Fort Amara was away on leave, but the Subaltern, his Deputy, had drifted down to the Club, where I found him and inquired of him whether it was really true that a political prisoner had been added to the attractions of the Fort. The Subaltern explained at great length, for this was the first time that he had held Command of the Fort, and his glory lay heavy upon him.

"Yes," said he, "a man was sent in to me about a week ago from down the line—a true gentleman whoever he is. Of course I did all I could for him. He had his two servants and some silver cooking-pots, and he looked for all the world like a native officer. I called him Subadar Sahib; just as well to be on the safe side, y'know. 'Look here, Subadar Sahib,' I said, 'you're handed over to my authority, and I'm supposed to guard you. Now I don't want to make your life hard, but you must make things easy for me. All the Fort is at your disposal, from the flagstaff to the dry ditch, and I shall be happy to entertain you in any way I can. But you mustn't take advantage of it. Give me your word that you won't try to escape, Subadar Sahib, and I'll give you my word

that you shall have no heavy guard put over you.' I thought the best way of getting at him was by going at him straight, y'know; and it was, by Jove! The old man gave me his word, and moved about the Fort as contented as a sick crow. He's a rummy chap—always asking to be told where he is and what the buildings about him are. I had to sign a slip of blue paper when he turned up, acknowledging receipt of his body and all that, and I'm responsible, y'know, that he doesn't get away. Queer thing, though, looking after a Johnnie old enough to be your grandfather isn't it? Come to the Fort one of these days and see him? "

For reasons which will appear, I never went to the Fort while Khem Singh was then within its walls. I knew him only as a gray head seen from Lalun's window—a gray head and a harsh voice. But natives told me that, day by day, as he looked upon the fair lands round Amara, his memory came back to him and, with it, the old hatred against the Government that had been nearly effaced in far-off Burma. So he raged up and down the West face of the Fort from morning till noon and from evening till the night, devising vain things in his heart, and croaking war-songs when Lalun sang on the City wall. As he grew more acquainted with Subaltern he unburdened his old heart of some of the passions that withered it. "Sahib," he used to say, tapping his stick against the parapet, "when I was a young man I was one of twenty thousand horsemen who came out of the City and rode round the plain here. Sahib, I was the leader of a hundred, then of a thousand, then of five thousand, and now! "—he pointed to his two servants. "But from the beginning to today I would cut the throats of all the Sahibs in the land if I could. Hold me fast, Sahib, lest I get away and return to those who would follow me. I forgot them when I was in Burma, but now that I am in my own country again, remember everything."

"Do you remember that you have given me your Honor not to make your tendance a hard matter? " said the Subaltern.

"Yes, to you, only to you, Sahib," said Khem Singh. "To you because you are of a pleasant countenance. If my turn comes again, Sahib, I will not hang you nor cut your throat."

"Thank you," said the Subaltern gravely, as he looked along the line of guns that could pound the City to powder in half an

hour. " Let us go into our own quarters, Khem Singh. Come and talk with me after dinner."

KHEM SINGH WOULD SIT on his own cushion at the Subaltern's feet, drinking heavy, scented anise-seed brandy in great gulps, and telling strange stories of Fort Amara, which had been a palace in the old days, of Begums and Ranees tortured to death—aye, in the very vaulted chamber that now served as a Mess-room; would tell stories of Sobraon that made the Subaltern's cheeks flush and tingle with pride of race, and of the Kuka rising from which so much was expected and the foreknowledge of which was shared by a hundred thousand souls. But he never told tales of '57 because, as he said, he was the Subaltern's guest, and '57 is a year that no man, Black or White, cares to speak of. Once only, when the anise-seed brandy had slightly affected his head, he said: "Sahib, speaking now of a matter which lay between Sobraon and the affair of the Kukas, it was ever a wonder to us that you stayed your hand at all, and that, having stayed it, you did not make the land one prison. Now I hear from without that you do great honor to all men of our country and by your own hands are destroying the Terror of your Name which is your strong rock and defence. This is a foolish thing. Will oil and water mix? Now in '57 . . . "

"I was not born then, Subadar Sahib," said the Subaltern, and Khem Singh reeled to his quarters.

The Subaltern would tell me of these conversations at the Club, and my desire to see Khem Singh increased. But Wali Dad, sitting in the window-seat of the house on the City wall, said that it would be a cruel thing to do, and Lalun pretended that I preferred the society of a grizzled old Sikh to hers.

"Here is tobacco, here is talk, here are many friends and all the news of the City, and, above all, here is myself. I will tell you stories and sing you songs, and Wali Dad will talk his English nonsense in your ears. Is that worse than watching the caged animal yonder? Go tomorrow, then, if you must, but today such and such an one will be here, and he will speak of wonderful things."

It happened that Tomorrow never came, and the warm heat of the latter Rains gave place to the chill of early October almost

before I was aware of the flight of the year. The Captain commanding the Fort returned from leave and took over charge of Khem Singh according to the laws of seniority. The Captain was not a nice man. He called all natives "niggers", which, besides being extreme bad form, shows gross ignorance.

"What's the use of telling off two Tommies to watch that old nigger?" said he.

"I fancy it soothes his vanity," said the Subaltern. "The men are ordered to keep well out of his way, but he takes them as a tribute to his importance, poor old wretch."

"I won't have Line men taken off regular guards in this way. Put on a couple of Native Infantry."

"Sikhs?" said the subaltern, lifting his eyebrows.

"Sikhs, Pathans, Dogras—they're all alike, these black vermin," and the Captain talked to Khem Singh in a manner which hurt that old gentleman's feelings. Fifteen years before, when he had been caught for the second time, everyone looked upon him as a sort of tiger. He liked being regarded in this light. But he forgot that the world goes forward in fifteen years, and many Subalterns are promoted to Captaincies.

"The Captain-pig is in charge of the Fort?" said Khem Singh to his native guard every morning. And the native guard said: "Yes, Subadar Sahib," in deference to his age and his air of distinction; but they did not know who he was.

IN THOSE DAYS the gathering in Lalun's little white room was always large and talked more than before.

"The Greeks," said Wali Dad who had been borrowing my books, "the inhabitants of the city of Athens, where they were always hearing and telling some new thing, rigorously secluded their women—who were fools. Hence, the glorious institution of the heterodox women—is it not?—who were amusing and *not* fools. All the Greek philosophers delighted in their company. Tell me, my friend, how it goes now in Greece and the other places upon the Continent of Europe. Are your womenfolk also fools?"

"Wali Dad," I said, "you never speak to us about your womenfolk and we never speak about ours to you. That is the bar between us."

"Yes," said Wali Dad, "it is curious to think that our common meeting-place should be here, in the house of a common—how do you call *her*?" He pointed with the pipemouth to Lalun.

"Lalun is nothing but Lalun," I said, and that was perfectly true. "But if you took your place in the world, Wali Dad, and gave up dreaming dreams . . ."

"I might wear an English coat and trouser. I might be a leading Muhammadan pleader. I might be received even at the Commissioner's tennis-parties where the English stand on one side and the natives on the other, in order to promote social intercourse throughout the Empire. Heart's Heart," said he to Lalun quickly, "the Sahib says that I ought to quit you."

"The Sahib is always talking stupid talk," returned Lalun with a laugh. "In this house I am a Queen and thou art a King. The Sahib"—she put her arms above her head and thought for a moment—"the Sahib shall be our Vizier—thine and mine, Wali Dad—because he has said that thou shouldst leave me."

Wali Dad laughed immoderately, and I laughed too. "Be it so," said he. "My friend, are you willing to take this lucrative Government appointment? Lalun, what shall his pay be?"

But Lalun began to sing, and for the rest of the time there was no hope of getting a sensible answer from her or Wali Dad. When the one stopped, the other began to quote Persian poetry with a triple pun in every other line. Some of it was not strictly proper, but it was all very funny, and it only came to an end when a fat person in black, with gold *pince-nez*, sent up his name to Lalun, and Wali Dad dragged me into the twinkling night to walk in a big rose-garden and talk heresies about Religion and Governments and a man's career in life.

THE MOHURRUM, the great mourning-festival of the Muhammadans, was close at hand, and the things that Wali Dad said about religious fanaticism would have secured his expulsion from the loosest-thinking Muslim sect. There were the rose-bushes round us, the stars above us, and from every quarter of the City came the boom of the big Mohurrum drums. You must know that the City is divided in fairly equal proportions between the Hindus and the Musalmans, and where both creeds belong to the fighting races, a

big religious festival gives ample chance for trouble. When they can—that is to say when the authorities are weak enough to allow it—the Hindus do their best to arrange some minor feast-day of their own in time to clash with the period of general mourning for the martyrs, Hasan and Hussain, the heroes of the Mohurram. Gilt and painted paper presentations of their tombs are borne with shouting and wailing, music, torches, and yells, through the principal thoroughfares of the City, which fakements are called *tazias*. Their passage is rigorously laid down beforehand by the Police, and detachments of Police accompany each *tazia*, lest the Hindus should throw bricks at it and the peace of the Queen and the heads of Her loyal subjects should thereby be broken. Mohurram time in a "fighting" town means anxiety to all the officials, because, if a riot breaks out, the officials and not the rioters are held responsible. The former must forsee everything, and while not making their precautions ridiculously elaborate, must see that they are at least adequate.

"Listen to the drums!" said Wali Dad. "That is the heart of the people—empty and making much noise. How, think you, will the Mohurram go this year? I think that there will be trouble."

He turned down a side-street and left me alone with the stars and a sleepy Police patrol. Then I went to bed and dreamed that Wali Dad had sacked the City and I was made Vizier, with Lalun's silver *huga* for mark of office.

All day the Mohurram drums beat in the City, and all day deputations of tearful Hindu gentlemen besieged the Deputy Commissioner with assurances that they would be murdered ere next dawning by the Muhammadans. "Which," said the Deputy Commissioner, in confidence to the Head of Police, "is a pretty fair indication that the Hindus are going to make 'emselves unpleasant. I think we can arrange a little surprise for them. I have given the heads of both Creeds fair warning. If they choose to disregard it, so much the worse for them."

THERE WAS A large gathering in Lalun's house that night, but of men that I had never seen before, if I except the fat gentleman in black with the gold *pince-nez*. Wali Dad lay in the window-seat, more bitterly scornful of his Faith and its manifestations than I had ever known him. Lalun's maid was very busy

cutting up and mixing tobacco for the guests. We could hear the thunder of the drums as the processions accompanying each *tazia* marched to the central gathering-place in the plain outside the City, preparatory to their triumphant re-entry and circuit within the walls. All the streets seemed ablaze with torches, and only Fort Amara was black and silent.

When the noise of the drums ceased, no one in the white room spoke for a time. "The first *tazia* has moved off," said Wali Dad, looking to the plain.

"That is very early," said the man with the *pince-nez*.

"It is only half-past eight." The company rose and departed.

"Some of them were men from Ladakh," said Lalun, when the last had gone. "They brought me brick-tea such as the Russians sell, and a tea-urn from Peshawur. Show me, now, how the English *Memsahibs* make tea."

The brick-tea was abominable. When it was finished Wali Dad suggested going into the streets. "I'm nearly sure that there will be trouble tonight," he said. "All the City thinks so, and *Vox Populi* is *Vox Dei*, as the Babus say. Now I tell you that at the corner of the Padshahi Gate you will find my horse all this night if you want to go about and to see things. It is a most disgraceful exhibition. Where is the pleasure of saying '*Ya Hasan, Ya Hussain*,' twenty thousand times in a night?"

All the processions — there were two and twenty of them — were now well within the City walls. The drums were beating afresh, the crowd were howling "*Ya Hasan! Ya Hussain!*" and beating their breasts, the brass bands were playing their loudest, and at every corner where space allowed, Muhammadan preachers were telling the lamentable story of the death of the Martyrs. It was impossible to move except with the crowd, for the streets were not more than twenty feet wide. In the Hindu quarters the shutters of all the shops were up and cross-barred. As the first *tazia*, a gorgeous erection ten feet high, was borne aloft on the shoulders of a score of stout men into the semi-darkness of the Gully of the Horsemen, a brickbat crashed through its talc and tinsel sides.

"Into thy hands, O Lord?" murmured Wali Dad profanely, as a yell went up from behind, and a native officer of Police jammed

his horse through the crowd. Another brickbat followed, and the *tazia* staggered and swayed where it had stopped.

"Go on! In the name of the *Sirkar*, go forward!" shouted the Policeman; but there was an ugly cracking and splintering of shutters, and the crowd halted, with oaths and growlings, before the house whence the brick-bat had been thrown.

Then, without any warning, broke the storm—not only in the Gully of the Horsemen, but in half a dozen other places. The *tazias* rocked like ships at sea, the long pole-torches dipped and rose round them while the men shouted: "The Hindus are dishonoring the *tazias*! Strike! Strike! Into their temples for the faith!" The six or eight Policemen with each *tazia* drew their batons, and struck as long as they could in the hope of forcing the mob forward, but they were overpowered, and as contingents of Hindus poured into the streets, the fight became general. Half a mile away where the *tazias* were yet untouched the drums and the shrieks of "*Ya Hasan! Ya Hussain!*" continued, but not for long. The priests at the corners of the streets knocked the legs from the bedsteads that supported their pulpits and smote for the Faith, while stones fell from the silent houses upon friend and foe, and the packed streets bellowed: "*Din! Din! Din!*" A *tazia* caught fire, and was dropped for a flaming barrier between Hindu and Musalman at the corner of the Gully. Then the crowd surged forward, and Wali Dad drew me close to the stone pillar of a well.

"It was intended from the beginning!" he shouted in my ear, with more heat than blank unbelief should be guilty of. "The bricks were carried up to the houses beforehand. These swine of Hindus! We shall be gutting kine in their temples tonight!"

TAZIA AFTER TAZIA, some burning, others torn to pieces, hurried past us and the mob with them, howling, shrieking, and striking at the house doors in their flight. At last we saw the reason of the rush. Hugonin, the Assistant District Superintendent of Police, a boy of twenty, had got together thirty constables and was forcing the crowd through the streets. His old gray Police-horse showed no sign of uneasiness as it was spurred breast-on into the crowd, and the long dog-whip with which he had armed himself was never still.

"They know we haven't enough Police to hold 'em," he cried as he passed me, mopping a cut on his face. "They *know* we haven't! Aren't any of the men from the Club coming down to help? Get on, you sons of burnt fathers!" The dog-whip cracked across the writhing backs, and the constables smote afresh with baton and gun-butt. With these passed the lights and the shouting, and Wali Dad began to swear under his breath. From Fort Amara shot up a single rocket; then two side by side. It was the signal for troops.

Petitt, the Deputy Commissioner, covered with dust and sweat, but calm and gently smiling, cantered up the clean-swept street in rear of the main body of the rioters. "No one killed yet," he shouted. "I'll keep 'em on the run till dawn! Don't let 'em halt, Hugonin! Trot 'em about till the troops come."

The science of the defence lay solely in keeping the mob on the move. If they had breathing-space they would halt and fire a house, and then the work of restoring order would be more difficult, to say the least of it. Flames have the same effect on a crowd as blood has on a wild beast.

Word had reached the Club and men in evening-dress were beginning to show themselves and lend a hand in heading off and breaking up the shouting masses with stirrup-leathers, whips, or chance-found staves. They were not very often attacked, for the rioters had sense enough to know that the death of a European would not mean one hanging but many, and possibly the appearance of the thrice-dreaded Artillery. The clamor in the City redoubled. The Hindus had descended into the streets in real earnest and ere long the mob returned. It was strange sight. There were no *taxis*—only their riven platforms—and there were no Police. Here and there a City dignitary, Hindu or Muhammadan, was vainly imploring his co-religionists to keep quiet and behave themselves—advice for which his white beard was pulled. Then a native officer of Police, unhorsed but still using his spurs with effect, would be borne along, warning all the crowd of the danger of insulting the Government. Everywhere men struck aimlessly with sticks, grasping each other by the throat, howling and foaming with rage, or beat with bare hands on the doors of the houses.

"It is a lucky thing that they are fighting with natural weapons,"

I said to Wali Dad, "else we should have half the City killed."

I turned as I spoke and looked at his face. His nostrils were distended, his eyes were fixed, and he was smiting himself softly on the breast. The crowd poured by with renewed riot—a gang of Musalmans hard-pressed by some hundred Hindu fanatics. Wali Dad left my side with an oath, and shouting: "*Ya Hasan! Ya Hussain!*" plunged into the thick of the fight I lost sight of him.

I FLED BY A SIDE ALLEY to the Padshahi Gate where I found Wali Dad's house, and thence rode to the Fort. Once outside the City wall, the tumult sank to a dull roar, very impressive under the stars and reflecting great credit on the fifty thousand angry able-bodied men who were making it. The troops who, at the Deputy Commissioner's instance, had been ordered to rendezvous quietly near the fort, showed no signs of being impressed. Two companies of Native Infantry, a squadron of Native Cavalry and a company of British Infantry were kicking their heels in the shadow of the East face, waiting for orders to march in. I am sorry to say that they were all pleased, unholily pleased, at the chance of what they called "a little fun." The senior officers, to be sure, grumbled at having been kept out of bed, and the English troops pretended to be sulky, but there was joy in the hearts of all the subalterns, and whispers ran up and down the line: "No ball-cartridge—what a beastly shame!" "Do you think the beggars will really stand up to us?" "Hope I shall meet my money-lender there. I owe him more than I can afford." "Oh, they won't let us even unsheathe swords." "Hurrah! Up goes the fourth rocket. Fall in, there!"

The Garrison Artillery, who to the last cherished a wild hope that they might be allowed to bombard the City at a hundred yards' range, lined the parapet above the East gateway and cheered themselves hoarse as the British Infantry doubled along the road to the Main Gate of the City. The Cavalry cantered on the Padshahi Gate, and the Native Infantry marched slowly to the Gate of the Butchers. The surprise was intended to be of a distinctly unpleasant nature, and to come on top of the defeat of the Police who had been just able to keep the Muhammadans from firing the houses of a few leading Hindus. The bulk of the riot lay in the north and north-

west wards. The east and southeast were by this time dark and silent, and I rode hastily to Lalun's house for I wished to tell her to send some one in search of Wali Dad. The house was unlighted but the door was open, and I climbed upstairs in the darkness. One small lamp in the white room showed Lalun and her maid leaning half out of the window, breathing heavily and evidently pulling at something that refused to come.

"Thou art late—very late," gasped Lalun without turning her head. "Help us now, O Fool, if thou hast not spent thy strength howling among the *tazias*. Pull! Nasiban and I can do no more! O Sahib, is it you? The Hindus have been hunting an old Muhammadan round the Ditch with clubs. If they find him again they will kill him. Help us to pull him up."

I put my hands to the long red silk waist-cloth that was hanging out of the window, and we three pulled and pulled with all the strength at our command. There was something very heavy at the end, and it swore in an unknown tongue as it kicked against the City wall.

"Pull, oh, pull!" said Lalun at the last. A pair of brown hands grasped the window-sill and a venerable Muhammadan tumbled upon the floor, very much out of breath. His jaws were tied up, his turban had fallen over one eye, and he was dusty and angry.

Lalun hid her face in her hands for an instant and said something about Wali Dad that I could not catch.

Then, to my extreme gratification, she threw her arms round my neck and murmured pretty things. I was in no haste to stop her: and Nasiban, being a handmaiden of tact, turned to the big jewel-chest that stands in the corner of the white room and rummaged among the contents. The Muhammadan sat on the floor and glared.

"One service more, Sahib, since thou hast come so opportunely," said Lalun. "Wilt thou"—it is very nice to be thou-ed by Lalun—"Take this old man across the city—the troops are everywhere, and they might hurt him for he is old—to the Kumharsen Gate? There I think he may find a carriage to take him to his house. He is a friend of mine, and thou art—more than a friend—therefore I ask this."

Nasiban bent over the old man, tucked something into his belt,

and I raised him up, and led him into the streets. In crossing from the east to the west of the City there was no chance of avoiding the troops and crowd. Long before I reached the Gully of the Horsemen I heard the shouts of the British Infantry crying cheerily: Hutt, ye beggars! Hutt, ye devils! Go forward, there! " Then followed the ringing of rifle-butts and shrieks of pain. The troops were banging the bare toes of the mob with their gun-butts—for not a bayonet had been fixed. My companion mumbled and jabbered as we walked on until we were carried back by the crowd and had to force our way to the troops. I caught him by the wrist and felt a bangle there—the iron bangle of the Sikhs—but I had no suspicions, for Lalun had only ten minutes before put her arms round me. Thrice we were carried back by the crowd, and when we made our way past the British Infantry it was to meet the Sikh Cavalry driving another mob before them with the butts of their lances.

"WHAT ARE THESE DOGS?" said the old man.

"Sikhs of the Cavalry, Father," I said, and we edged our way up the line of horses two abreast and found the Deputy Commissioner, his helmet smashed on his head, surrounded by a knot of men who had come down from the Club as amateur constables and had helped the Police mightily.

"We'll keep 'em on the run till dawn," said Pettitt. "Who's your villainous friend?"

I had only time to say: "The Protection of the *Sirkar*!" when a fresh crowd flying before the Native Infantry carried us a hundred yards nearer to the Kumharsen Gate, and Pettitt was swept away like a shadow.

"I do not know—I cannot see—this is all new to me!" moaned my companion. "How many troops are there in the City?"

"Perhaps five hundred," I said.

"A lakh of men beaten by five hundred—and Sikhs among them! Surely, surely, I am an old man, but—the Kumharsen Gate is new. Who pulled down the stone lions? Where is the conduit? Sahib, I am a very old man, and, alas, I—I cannot stand." He dropped in the shadow of the Kumharsen Gate where there was no disturbance. A fat gentleman wearing gold *pince-nez* came out of the darkness.

"You are most kind to my old friend," he said suavely. "He is a landholder of Akala. He should not be in a big City when there is religious excitement. But I have a carriage here. You are quite truly kind. Will you help me to put him into the carriage? It is very late."

We bundled the old man into a hired victoria that stood close to the gate, and I turned back to the house on the City wall. The troops were driving the people to and fro, while the Police shouted, "To your houses! Get to your houses!" and the dog-whip of the Assistant District Superintendent cracked remorselessly. Terror-stricken *bunnias* clung to the stirrups of the cavalry, crying that their houses had been robbed (which was a lie), and the burly Sikh horsemen patted them on the shoulder, and bade them return to those houses lest a worse thing should happen. Parties of five or six British soldiers, joining arms, swept down the side-gullies, their rifles on their backs, stamping, with shouting and song, upon the toes of Hindu and Musalman. Never was religious enthusiasm more systematically squashed; and never were poor breakers of the peace more utterly weary and footsore. They were routed out of holes and corners, from behind well-pillars and byres, and bidden to go their houses. If they had no houses to go to, so much the worse for their toes.

On returning to Lalun's door I stumbled over a man at the threshold. He was sobbing hysterically and his arms flapped like the wings of a goose. It was Wali Dad, Agnostic and Unbeliever, shoeless, turbanless, and frothing at the mouth, the flesh on his chest bruised and bleeding from the vehemence with which he had smitten himself. A broken torch-handle lay by his side, and his quivering lips murmured, "*Ya Hasan! Ya Hussain!*" as I stooped over him. I pushed him a few steps up the staircase, threw a pebble at Lalun's City window and hurried home.

Most of the streets were very still, and the cold wind that comes before the dawn whistled down them. In the center of the Square of the Mosque a man was bending over a corpse. The skull had been smashed in by gun-butt or bamboo-stave.

"It is expedient that one man should die for the people," said Pettitt grimly, raising the shapeless head. "These brutes were beginning to show their teeth too much."

And from afar we could hear the soldiers singing *Two Lovely Black Eyes* as they drove the remnant of the rioters within doors.

OF COURSE YOU can guess what happened? I was not so clever. When the news went abroad that Khem Singh had escaped from the Fort, I did not, since I was then living this story, not writing it, connect myself, or Lalun, or the fat gentleman with the gold *pince-nez*, with his disappearance. Nor did it strike me that Wali Dad was the man who should have convoyed him across the City, or that Lalun's arms round my neck were put there to hide the money that Nasiban gave to Khem Singh, and that Lalun had used me and my white face as even a better safeguard than Wali Dad who proved himself so untrustworthy. All that I knew at the time was that, when Fort Amara was taken up with riots, Khem Singh profited by the confusion to get away, and that his two Sikh guards also escaped.

But later on I received full enlightenment; and so did Khem Singh. He fled to those who knew him in the old days, but many of them were dead and more were changed, and all knew something of the Wrath of the Government. He went to the young men, but the glamor of his name had passed away, and they were entering native regiments of Government offices, and Khem Singh could give them neither pension, decorations, nor influence—nothing but a glorious death with their backs to the mouth of a gun. He wrote letters and made promises, and the letters fell into bad hands, and a wholly insignificant subordinate officer of Police tracked them down and gained promotion thereby. Moreover, Khem Singh was old, and anise-seed brandy was scarce, and he had left his silver cooking-pots in Fort Amara with his nice warm bedding, and the gentleman with the gold *pince-nez* was told by those who had employed him that Khem Singh as a popular leader was not worth the money paid.

"Great is the mercy of these fools of English!" said Khem Singh when the situation was put before him. "I will go back to Fort Amara of my own free will and gain honor. Give me good clothes to return in."

So, at his own time, Khem Singh knocked at the wicket-gate of the Fort and walked to the Captain and the Subaltern, who were nearly gray-headed on account of correspondence that daily arrived from Simla marked "Private."

"I have come back, Captain Sahib," said Khem Singh. "Put no more guards over. It is no good out yonder."

A week later I saw him for the first time to my knowledge, and he made as though there were an understanding between us.

"It was well done, Sahib," said he, "and greatly I admired your astuteness in this boldly facing the troops when I, whom they would have doubtless torn to pieces, was with you. Now there is a man in Fort Ooltagarh whom a bold man could with ease help to escape. This is the position of the Fort as I draw it on the sand . . .

But I was thinking how I had become Lalun's Vizier after all.



The street noises of Times Square changed abruptly. The traffic tumult changed. Brakes squealed swiftly. A cop's police-whistle blew. There was an indecisive, milling confusion among the folk on foot. Then another Monster appeared.

This one came out of nowhere, slithering agilely . . . It was a great bulk fifteen feet in diameter with legs of incredible vastness. It was a spider . . . And then something huge tumbled clumsily . . . and spread colossal wings to break its fall, and bounced hugely from the sidewalk . . . It was a beetle, green in color, but obscenely fat. It writhed and wriggled crazily, getting itself upright again, while motorcars stopped with smoking tires to keep from running into it—because its bulk was that of a moving-van. It heaved itself erect and began to walk down the middle of Seventh Avenue in an extraordinary, machine-like preoccupation, its antennae moving weirdly, its ghastly mandibles outstretched before it.

Don't Miss

THE MONSTERS, by Murray Leinster

in the March 1968 issue of

MAGAZINE OF HORROR

TIME: 1918

PLACE: Honduras



GRAVEYARD LIMITED

by THEODORE ROSCOE

Big Dan Bonsteel married in haste and found there was no leisure for repentance. And when he died of yellow fever, his unlovely widow was determined that the engineer's body was not to be burned, even if it meant defying the government. That led to a mad chase with two broken-down locomotives pursuing each other over the rails, and an amateur trying to do a job that only an expert like Bonsteel could handle.



Those wild Hondurans were gaining fast

THIS COULD HAVE happened only in Honduras, where the jungled mountains tower like silent, dark monuments under the sky; where brown men hack each other to ribbons that you may have your banana split at the Greek's for five cents cheaper than at the Red Band Drug Store; where sugar can grow amidst a welter of deadly fever; where the marimba's melody can inspire the machete's savage swish; where the village of Gracias a Dios nestles high and stinking against the frontier stars, while the town of Puerto Paloma crouches steaming on the bay; where the sun unsteadies your feet and the moon unsteadies your head.

The days are too bright in Honduras; the nights are too dark. And in 1918, it seemed to me, they were brighter and darker.

Those were the days when the Central American Fruit Company owned all the bananas around Gracias a Dios and railroaded them down to Puerto Paloma to get them stowed on ships for New Orleans. There was a big sugar plantation on the coast, near the end of the line; and Guitierre Miguel Wenceslao Saavedra was a

pompous lieutenant in the Honduran regular army. Puerto Paloma and Gracias a Dios were shanty towns populated with blacks, Indians, halfbreeds, riff-raff Latins, and all the racial colors of Joseph's coat. You could count the white men on three fingers, namely: Big Dan Bonesteel, Doc Foster — not the same as "went to Glo'ster," but the beery-breathed medico who sewed up knife cuts in the banana camps — and me.

Big Dan Bonesteel was tall as a tree, with corn-yellow hair, with hands that could bend a brake-rod into a horseshoe, with grease in his ears, and a rueful smile on his lips. Doc Foster was a fat little man in untidy whites, a sun helmet with the crown stove in, and with the apple-checked face of a cherub on a church window and the agile brain of a whiskey bottle. I was younger than I am now, and my hair was a whole lot darker.

Translated to English, Honduras meant — and still means — *The waves*. The waves. I want you to know that the railroad running the eighty-four miles between that God-lost, banana-infested mountain village of Gracias a Dios and the waterfront of Puerto Paloma was "wavy." A Coney Island roller coaster could have learned some new wrinkles from that single, rusty, narrow, scrap-iron, crazy-bedded thread of track. And if you wanted the wildest ride in your life, all you had to do was go galloping upgrade from Puerto Paloma with a string of empties cracking the whip behind your tender. If you wanted the fastest ride you ever had, you'd rock down from Gracias a Dios at fifty, with the box cars stuffed with green bananas, with flat wheels banging, with sparks flying from the rails, and spikes jumping out of the rotted ties; you'd go shrieking across the sugar cane field and hammering up the dock, with just time to catch the last fruit boat for New Orleans.

Anything might be on the track to switch you into the Hereafter — anything from an old crone skinning a pig to a pile of coconuts thrown down by monkeys from the palm trees; from a dead horse to a brown baby paring its chubby toenails with a banana knife. Or, like as not, a washout from the tropical rains. Or a section of track missing — torn up by the Carib Indians who thought the strangers were up in Gracias a Dios hunting a legendary treasure — silver beads hidden somewhere thereabouts by their ancestors. And if that wasn't enough, the Hondurans were al-

ways flagging the train to hand up a new set of rules and regulations just made by the latest president in the latest revolution.

There was a pair of engines—Number One and Number Two—antediluvian relics from the museums. Noah had brewed tea in them on the Ark, and the C.A.F.C. had bought them at a dime a piece, after the Civil War. Big, bony engines with crooked wheels under skinny bodies, with spreading cow-catchers and enormous fan-top stacks; with cozy little cabs crowded with soot, grease, flame, oil-cans, cinders, oaths and a heat to peel the skin off your flesh while the coal tender racketed along behind and a Negro fireman named Olaf Jorgensen hurled scoops of coal at the crimson mouth of the firedoor. It was hot in tropical Honduras. It was hotter in an engine cab.

BIG DAN Bonesteel ran the engines, and Big Dan was the sort of "hogger" who could fasten a coffee pot to a roller skate and send the thing highballing. ' Now and again, he'd let me drive an engine up to Gracias a Dios, but I knew little more than how to start and stop the contraptions. Big Dan knew every bolt and joint on those wrecks; he could take them apart and put them together and make them tick the way a Swiss tinkers with a watch and makes it go. While Number Two reposed in the Gracias a Dios roundhouse for coaling and watering, Big Dan grabbed Number One and raced for Puerto Paloma with a load of bananas. Then he roared back with empties for the mountain terminal, picked up the fresh locomotive with the fresh load of bananas, and thundered back to Puerto Paloma.

I could guess why, nine years before, Doc Foster had retired to that hooligan outpost. The mosquito-ridden coasts are alive with renegade medicos, and inland towns are likely to offer a better chance. Why Big Dan had drifted in there with him I couldn't guess. Big Dan was nobody's beachcomber, and he could have been cutting time any run on the New York Central. Here he was in that jungle hole, at thirty a week—every day but "Domingo"—and living in a shack up in Gracias a Dios, with nothing to do during off hours but sit around shaking with malaria or playing pinochle with Doc, or sneaking off for a lonely stroll in the jungle. His first run was at 7 A.M.—when the boat was in—and his last was mid-

of Hollands across his lap.

She had a jaw — and *feet*. Her hair was like cotton thread, fastened under a flat hat such as social workers wear. Her dress was black, and there was a grim set to her face. Her shoulders were as square as a schoolmarm's. You understood that she had been teaching. You gleaned that impression from the thin black mustache on her tight upper lip and the disapproval in her eyes, behind pinch spectacles that were attached to a black ribbon, and the black ribbon attached to a little gold *fleur-de-lys* on her chest. She stood on flat-heeled shoes, and in one hand she held a straw suitcase, in the other a mesh bag filled with black books. Lord! Framed against the white sunlight of Honduras, she was like something in iron. She must have been at least forty.

I could hear Doc Foster gurgling under his breath, and I got up on stiff legs. "Well — congratulations."

Mrs. Bonesteel cut short Big Dan's introductions with a sharp, unsmiling nod, a glare at Doc and a sniff at me that said, "Tramps!" Her next gesture snatched the glass from Big Dan's fingers, and before the poor fellow could protest she had him, figuratively speaking, by the ear and was marching him out of there.

"I want you to understand, Dan Bonesteel, that I'll tolerate none of this hoodlumism and drinking!"

When bride and groom were departed, I looked at Doc and Doc looked at me. The doctor appeared to be sick. The apples in his cheeks had gone from ripe to green. He tipped back his helmet and swore:

"Now trepan me with a meat-ax!" he burst out. "I should have known better than to let that fathead maniac go away on his vacation alone. Why, the fool ought to travel with a night nurse. Confound it, he'll ruin everything!"

Just what he'd ruined, other than his bachelorhood, I couldn't comprehend. The unregenerate physician, Foster, always mingled medical terms with solid invective.

"Sew up a sponge in me if I thought *this* would happen! Good Lord! Married! — To *that*!" He mopped his face savagely. "Well, it couldn't have happened anywhere but Honduras!"

I knew what Doc Foster meant. In Honduras, as I've stated, the

days are too bright and the nights too dark. Bonesteel had lived too long alone, up there in that mountain outpost. Given a break back to civilization, he'd lost his head and married the first white woman he'd seen in seven years. Still, it wasn't the first time that some wild, rawhide frontiersman had gone off on a spree and come back determined to settle down.

"Romantic!" Doc Foster sneered. "Got the mind of a boy. She must out-date him by five years."

A MOTHER complex, Doc pronounced it. I thought I understood. The tropic stars can do more for a woman, a little Spanish music and warm air and a glass of Bacardi added, than five hundred tons of make-up. Big Dan's would be a dog-like devotion, wanting home and love and that sort of thing. I know he worshipped her for at least a week. Then began that rueful little smile in the corner of his mouth. A simple fellow, Big Dan; a mechanic at heart. The awakening must have been abysmal.

"You think you're going down to Puerto Paloma and drink with those scoundrels, Jones and Foster? Well, let me tell you, you can stay home Sundays and dig a new well on our compound!"

Or—"I won't have that rascally physician around *this* house!" Or "If you really loved your wife—and I'm trying so hard . . ."

Then maybe a burst of metallic sobs. She'd been married before, you see. Doc Foster informed me with a growl:

"Her husband was vice consul in Belize. Probably a blind man, and died of falling down the back stairs, tryin' to sneak out."

In Gracias a Dios, lost up there in the mountains, Big Dan couldn't sneak out. He couldn't chew tobacco, either, or do a lot of other things he'd always done. Mrs. Bonesteel called him simply "Bonesteel," with a tinge of scorn to the appellation; and if, in final stubbornness, he refused compliance with one of her demands, the vigilant woman had a "heart attack" handy, because of his brutal conduct, or a violent sick headache that lasted three days.

Obediently, he set about digging the well and repairing the roof, but it was hard to slave all day on a Sunday, after a solid week of hauling bananas, down there in the tropics, where the heat curled everybody and everything except Mrs. Bonesteel's hair, and where the nights were like a bath of morphine.

"And if you had a decent man's ambition you'd get me out of here and go to America and run a *real* locomotive . . . "

Big Dan was patient, in his dogged way. "You leave my locomotives alone. Them's good engines." He protested he wasn't ready to go to America. If she'd only wait till he got enough money . . .

"Money? At thirty dollars a week?" You should have heard that sneer, as I heard it more than once.

Big Dan would shake his head. "But I told you before we was married . . . "

"Oh!" The woman would clap a hand to her forehead. "If my health were only better . . . "

Her health was perfect; and she was one of those females who was addicted to fads. Vegetarian diet—and Big Dan must eat no meat, either. And cold water. But I think the spiritualism was the heaviest straw.

CAN YOU SEE Big Dan, plugging up the dark path from the roundhouse, laden with sweat and grease, that first night home? To find a dinner of cold potatoes waiting, and his bride ensconced in a seance! The lamps of the bungalow turned low, the only sound the buzzing of mosquitoes and the nocturnal chirp of tree frogs, and in the air that unaccountable smell of rotting coconut husks that spoils the breeze around Honduran towns. Mrs. Bonesteel sitting bolt upright in the shadows of her chosen corner; books by Oliver Lodge and Conan Doyle and the Fox Sisters strewn at her boots; her hands clutched together in her lap; face clenched and eyes shut in a trance. A real Spiritualist would spit.

Trying to establish communication with her dead first husband, she told him. To an earthy fellow like Big Dan, used to fighting in the open and downing hot meals, it must have been a shock. It must have given him a turn.

"You're too pigheaded, too soulless to understand the psychic forces in the outer world." She was quick to show the contempt that one immersed in the occult, self-invited into the "inner circle," displays toward show-witted humanity. "You and that criminal doctor friend of yours—won't have the man around here—are too utterly material to see beyond the cosmic void."

"Psychic forces?—Cosmic void?" You can imagine the abashed

railroad engineer scratching his scalp, looking at his wife with puzzled, half-frightened blue eyes. And then, for the ensuing six months, coming home to a bungalow steadily filling with books from psychical research societies in England; strange pamphlets from heaven knew where; and queerish photographs of faces, misty under clouds of steam.

"That's not steam, you fool!— That's an aura."

"That there?— I mean, it looks like a ghost . . . "

"You would!— Ghost, indeed! That's your cheap little worldly, superstitious mind. I told you to read that book I gave you, Bonesteel, and I see you haven't so much as done me the courtesy of opening it.— That's no ghost. That's an ectoplasmic emanation from the soul of one gone Beyond. Called from the after-world by Renard, the great French medium. If you only took the trouble to try to understand your wife, you'd know that I'm on the verge of attaining mediumistic power. Already I have heard the voices, have spoken with the dead, and some day may raise the dead, calling the spirit . . . "

His smile must have been rueful, then, the idea finally penetrating the flywheels, cogs, piston-rods, steamboxes, bolts and gauges of his, you might say "one-track," locomotive engineer's mind. Good Lord! Then he couldn't get away from it, even after he was gone. And *raise* the dead . . .

Doc Foster, who happened in, bluff and uninvited, to overhear this conversation told me that Big Dan shaded a trifle pale. And I think this trend to the domestic lecturings clicked something in the back of the big engineer's head. The man gave up.

Mrs. Bonesteel shut herself away from what little world there was in that miserable banana outpost, and wrapped herself in a mystic, and at the same time grim-jawed, mantle of spiritualism. Big Dan dolefully returned to his first loves, Engines One and Two, and the hard grind of freighting bananas. Doc Foster and I spent our nights off, in secret annoyance at each other's tiresome company, drinking to the fate of our lost *compadre*; and Big Dan spent his nights off digging new wells in new dry seasons, in patching the roof or in dodging Mrs. Bonesteel's diatribes.

And the nights are too dark in Honduras. Apes sing strangely

at the moon — unearthly monkey cries — and the jungled mountains seem to be waiting.

It was about this time that I heard Big Dan say the job would be the death of him yet; and not long after that, Mrs. Bonesteel phoned to tell me he was dead.

3

I COULDN'T believe it. It was Saturday night, and not an hour earlier I'd heard the coughing of Big Dan's engine, finished with its midnight run, as it backed up the siding on the edge of the village. Big Dan dead! In an end-of-the-world hole like that, hemmed in by mountain night and by the sort of silence that fingers your face, death has a terrible sound.

Hurrying across the village, past tin-roofed warehouses, native shacks, thatch-topped Indian huts and up the black-swaddled path to Big Dan's bungalow, I was swamped with a blue loneliness. What had finished the big chap? A machete leaping out of the dark? A burst of steam? A bullet?

A squad of parrot-eyed Honduran soldiers had camped in the village that day, I remembered. Could one of those crack-brained fools have potshot the engineer? What happened to people when they died, anyway? Mrs. Bonesteel could snarl about souls translated into invisible quivers that floated about in space. With that round, lemon-colored moon creeping around a shoulder of cliff, I didn't like to think about it; I didn't want to go up to Big Dan's bungalow and meet his gloomy widow.

The village that night seemed alive with secret excitement. It was one of those nights when you hear boards cracking in the heat and the darkness walking. In the honkytonks the guitars had stopped. Hut windows were black, and I had a feeling of shadows scurrying past me.

Poor Dan! What did these Latins care? Just another *Gringo* out of the way. — What did anybody care? I tried to think of something to say to Mrs. Bonesteel, and couldn't think of anything. Death is the last word, in a place like that.

The woman was standing in her doorway, arms akimbo, rigid as a granite mortician. Worse than that, for she'd draped herself

in black, with a loose black veil thrown aside from her face; and in the dim, amber light stealing from the inner room, her chiseled features were as unnatural as those of a mannish female impersonator playing doorman to a tomb.

"Mrs. Bonesteel," I faltered, "This is— is . . . "

"He's in there." She nodded her jaw over her shoulder, and her voice was made of wood. "Couldn't you get here sooner? You're the head of this filthy banana camp."

She was a terrifying person, at that time of night. Either she was actually turning to stone, holding like iron under terrific emotional strain, or she was one of those women who fainted at nothing, who never shed a tear. I tell you, it was somber. Her eyes, without glasses, were as dry as bits of obsidian. She'd expressed a desire that I stay away from there, and I hadn't seen her in a couple of months; and so the sight of her, that night, with my nerves already unstrung, rattled my spipe.

For a flash I wondered if she'd killed Big Dan; but she was glaring at me as if the fault were mine.

"I— I'm sorry," I muttered.

"Why sorry?" she came back, in that seance tone. "He has gone to a better world. We are taking him away, and you've got to help."

THEN I GOT another shock. There was a smell of whiskey in the doorway, and I saw Doc Foster standing there. Whether his eyes were glassy from grief or alcohol I couldn't tell, but his sleeves were rolled up on stubby, pale arms, and his manner was revoltingly brisk. I glared at the man in angry astonishment. That fat little crocodile! Apparently, he was no more perturbed by the presence of death than Mrs. Bonesteel. And Big Dan had been Doc Foster's friend.

"I've just finished the autopsy, madame," said Foster, clearing his throat professionally. "He died of apoplexy induced by sudden fever. Oh, Jones." He switched to me, his voice lowering. "Ha— glad you've come— this is— well, sad to say the least. Poor Bonesteel! Well, it was over in a minute. A wretched business."

He voiced the suspicion of a hiccup.

"Dan was out in the compound digging a well, not half hour ago. He was waist deep in the ditch. I was watching from my shack.

Suddenly I saw him throw up his arms and go down. I rushed over, of course, but he was lying at the bottom of the ditch. Stone dead. Gone. — Apoplexy, yes. Like that. Whiff. — Well, he—he'd had a fever. Must have caught it down in the cane somewhere. Resistance lowered by not having enough solid food, I should say, and it got him. I've just finished the autopsy . . . "

Autopsy? If he said that word again, in that offhand tone, I'd kill the brute! You'd have thought Big Dan was just another interesting specimen for that doctor; an entertaining case. I could have wrung some feeling into the beachcombing physician's fat neck. With a soiled handkerchief, he mopped the accordion pleats on the back of his neck, and started to roll down his sleeves.

"Naturally—er—and Mrs. Bonesteel agrees with me—we've got to get him out of here. The—uh—heat, you know."

"I won't have Bonesteel buried in this God-forsaken spot!" his widow announced grimly. "God knows I can at least give my husband a decent burial—and a stone. I was telling him only last week, if anything happened to him on that wretched railroad—oh, being an engineer's wife is a life of constant sorrow and worry—he must have a respectable resting place. I shall take him to New Orleans."

"We're going to take him down on the train," Foster nodded. "We've got just about enough time to catch the last boat before next week."

Remember, the jungle was standing around whispering, and there were the mountains, looming purple against the stars, and the moon beginning to paint yellow and black down the cliffs. Mrs. Bonesteel's face was like a mask in gray stone, framed in mourner's weeds. The frowsy doctor rolling down his cuffs. Then the woman, staring off at nothing, and muttering:

"I shall try to establish communication with Bonesteel. If the power—the power would only come!—We must concentrate. The dead shall rise again . . . "

But the room inside was worse. The single lamp was low, and bluish flame was fluttering close down on the wick. Chair-legs creaked in the heat and shadows lay in crazy patterns across walls and floor. Big Dan, lying there on the cot, his inert frame wrapped in a white sheet, mummified and silent. Muffled in that shroud from

foot to forehead, with just the top of his brow showing, and with one arm hanging down with the hand dangling free, the skin as green as house paint.

Doc Foster, dodging in front of me, yelled: "Don't go near! It was *yellow fever*. — Contagion!"

Mrs. Bonesteel gave a sudden squawk in the doorway; there was the sound of running boots coming out of night, a faint haze of dust, firecracker Spanish dialect, an arm shoving the woman aside, and a figure in gaudy uniform standing on the threshold.

"I am Guiterre Miguel Wenceslao Saavedra, lieutenant of the Honduran regular army. And these, *senores*, are my men."

Cat-like whispers stiff with authority, and fierce, lizard-quick, accusing eyes.

"Word has come to me of the Americano dying of contagion," the Honduran officer continued. "I refer you to the new ruling of President Pastore's government, Article Twelve, Section Nine, Constitutional Amendment Four Thousand Seven, Law On Public Health. And I place you under arrest for not informing authorities of this case at once. Furthermore, I demand the body of the corpse for disposal as contagious, in immediate bonfire!"

I shall not soon forget what happened then!

4

"BONFIRE!" Mrs. Bonesteel whirled on the shrimpish Honduran with the astounding ferocity which large women so often develop. Her bark was as angry as a dog's. "You mean you're going to cremate my husband? — Burn his body?"

The officer drew himself up to a height. "It is the law."

"Not *my* husband's body, you're not!" She knotted a fist. "Bonesteel was my husband, and no picayune Spaniard is going to tell *me* what to do with him! He belongs to the spirit world now, and his soul is translated to the non-corporeal. I am," she chanted in the voice of a rune, "working on a new theory, one of my own conception, and if the Master Spirit wills it, I shall talk with Bonesteel's departed soul and ask it to return to its earthly body . . ."

It was enough to rattle my teeth, that woman talking such un-earthly patter, the mummy-wrapped figure on the cot with its green

hand and green forehead. Doc Foster looked bad, too. Standing behind me, he was making strangling noises in his throat; sweat was sprouting in shiny drops on his cheeks. The lieutenant and the men banded at his back began to mutter. I don't suppose they understood a word the woman was droning.

Guiterre Miguel Wenceslao Saavedra moved forward. "I must demand that the *senora* stand aside . . . "

He didn't know Mrs. Bonesteel. She swept out a hand and knocked the officer a slam against the wall that shook the roof and took a good deal of the bombast out of his doublet. She wasn't the sort to stand aside for anybody.

The Honduran officer howled like a kicked wildcat. And the next thing I knew a batch of barefoot soldiers were crowding through the door, Mrs. Bonesteel was whirling in the midst of bedlam, the lieutenant was trying to draw the saber from the scabbard caught between his legs, and there was hell to pay. In that room of death the uproar was fantastic and terrible.

"Fight them!" the woman screamed. "Fight the rats!"

She waded through the tangle, fists striking out, eyes blazing. Holy St. Mackerel, didn't they blaze! The Latin temper blew sky high, and four Hondurans threw themselves on top of me. Some one was rattling handcuff chains. The lieutenant was shrieking:

"Arrest them! In the name of Law!"

A chair broke, crackling. Dust boiled up off the carpet. Trampling feet and flying fists. Doc Foster took a gun butt on the chin, tumbled backwards and sprawled howling atop the body on the cot.

"The back door!" Mrs. Bonesteel squalled above the din. "The back door!"

A gun crashed like a cannon, and the lamp on the table popped to a thousand fragments, plunging that hot, close room into darkness and oily smoke. I could hear the soldiers howling like tigers

"*Caracoles!*" "*Por Dios!*" "*Carramba!*"

Mrs. Bonesteel screaming, "No filthy little Spaniard . . . "

THE BACK door. We were out of there, running across the compound, the woman coming behind me with long strides, the army coming behind the woman, Doc Foster up ahead, his short

legs rabbiting, and hugged in his sweating arms that body wrapped in its white sheet.

I was sick, I can tell you. As long as I live, I never hope to see anything like that. Doc Foster lugging Big Dan's body. That locomotive engineer had stood six feet, remember; and the corrupted little physician was carrying him off through the night as he might have carried a child—for all the world like a grave robber hotfooting it out of a cemetery with his ghoulish burden, the police bringing up the rear.

We plunged through a mass of banana plants, through a thicket of coconut palms, their white boles wizardish in moonlight, and down a reeking alley. That whole dreadful village was racketing like a canning factory. A batch of half naked men spilled around a corner. Indians, joining the rumpus! "Get the *Gringo*!"—"Stop thief!"—"Bandido!" Yells traveled up the mountain, splitting the blackness with frantic echoes. All Honduras was after us now.

"The railroad!" Mrs. Bonesteel screeched.

I don't know how we outdistanced them, how we got on that train. Olaf Jorgensen had nursed steam up in the engines—as a general rule, we kept them hot all night—but the fireman was nowhere in sight when we got to the siding. Number One stood there, steaming drowsily, with one loaded banana car hooked to the tender. We got aboard—the body, Doc, Mrs. Bonesteel and I. I don't know how. I remember Doc darting like a guinea around the cow-catcher, to throw the switch that would get us on the main line. I remember, too, the indomitable woman beating on my shoulders.

"Get up in that engine and drive!" she screamed.

"I'm no engineer!" I protested, with nerves. "I'm a plantation manager."

"You get up in there and run that thing!" she commanded.

Well, I did know how to throw the throttle. Shades of Casey Jones! My first yank had the wheels spinning on the track like buzz saws. But Doc did something with a lever that released sand. The flanges took hold; Number One jumped forward with a neck-cracking jolt, sprang out of the siding, shot across the switch leaning over like a ship, thundered down the open road.

"Go it, you fool!" Doc's shout was almost jubilant. "Let her blow! Operate! We got just time to make the boat!"

I slammed the throttle, and the drivers pounded full blast. The track dropped straight ahead for a mile, a silvery highway in the moonlight, black-green jungle walls sheer on either side. Steam blowing like whales' spouts from the boxes, pistons hammering, smoke streaking like ink from the stack, we tore down that river of jungle moonlight. Yes, and we'd forgotten to light the headlamp!

Gales of wind ripped through the open windows of the cab; the floor bounced in a way to hurl me off my sideseat, so that I had to hang on with white hands. I could hear metal clanging, see Doc Foster, bent double, his renegade helmet tipped over his eyes and his face painted a wild crimson in the flame of the fire door, stoking like a madman. It was hot in that cab—hotter than a furnace. Sweat ran from every pore in my face; yet it was like icewater. Talk about a graveyard run!

That train with its single box car crashing a downhill hole through tropic night was *it*! I could look back over my shoulder, you understand; and there on the deck of the tender, her widow's weeds blowing like black wings from her shoulders, her face like gray granite, her body balanced against the sway of the car, Mrs. Bonesteel hovered over the white-wrapped body, stark and stiff.

THE WOMAN turned her head as I looked, and shrieked: "Hurry, you fool! Hurry!—The other engine! They're coming after us!"

Can you get a picture of the thing? That pounding six-wheeler rolling down the loose track. That scamp of a doctor playing Vulcan with the coal scoop. Iron and smoke, banging and clanging, the stack of spouting red light like the chimney of a blast furnace. Me hanging white and half-witted in the cab window. The woman crouching on the deck of the coal car, veils streaming, rocky face bared to the moon, eyes opalescent, over the shrouded body like the black statue of Charon—Angel of Death—conducting a passenger to the Land of Shades. Wow!

And that other train, as I saw it when we rounded the curve, hammering and whistling in red hot pursuit, Engine Number Two, whip-cracking its string of empties, wild faces, fists, guns hanging from the cab windows and the ender, the brown men like so many monkeys on the decks of the box cars.

We were moving, I can promise you that! The jungle was tearing past my face in a black streak. Two miles down the line, in sudden desperation, I yanked the whistle cord — *Whoooo-shooo-whooooeee!* — but the goat I had spied on the tracks never had time to get off, and we weren't stopping. The animal must have soared five hundred feet, twisting high in the air against the yellow moon.

Mrs. Bonesteel shouted, "They're getting closer!"

A bullet went *ping!* and ricocheted off the sill under my elbow. I pulled in my ears, then. That Honduran lieutenant behind us meant business. Hondurans have no particular fondness for North Americans, especially when the Hondurans outnumber them twenty to one. There must have been sixty Indians, besides that squad of comic opera soldiers, hanging and shrieking on that train behind us. The Indians brandished machetes and the soldiers waved guns. Those soldiers were mad — tough customers. The lieutenant was mad, too. Spanish officers don't like to be slapped in the face. I could imagine how the telegraph wires that made a liquid fence alongside the track were buzzing this piece of news, and I wondered what sort of reception we were in for in Puerto Paloma.

Doc cursed at my elbow, leaning out of the cab and shaking a fist aft.

"Give her all the juice she can take! They're gettin' up on us! We're pullin' a loaded car, that's why! You don't want 'em to burn poor old Dan . . ."

Poor old Dan! I thought of the chap wrapped in that white sheet, stiff and stark atop the swaying tender, and I choked. Doc whirled, grabbed a funnel of sand, poured it into the firedoor to clear the flue. Smoke sped from the stack in an inky hurricane.

Mrs. Bonesteel was half blotted out by the streaming fog. Hair blew in a thicket over her face, her cheeks were streaked as with a minstrel's burnt cork, but not with tears. There wasn't a tear in the woman. Standing there atop the tender in smoke and moonlight, she moved her lips in a sort of mumbling, and every once in a while she'd move her hands and make a pass over the sheet-wrapped body at her feet. Somehow, the thing got in my back teeth and made them chatter.

"You ought to get her into that box car!" I yelled at Doc. "She'll fall off or get hit. — They're shooting!"

"Can't!" Doc hollered. "Cars loaded to the roof with bananas . . . "

5

WE TOOK an S curve in a way that made the hair on my scalp stand at attention; we thundered through a narrow gorge, tore across a wooden trestle and dashed a straight five miles in as many minutes, with my heart like a lump of dough in my mouth. The cab was a young inferno of heat, cinders, spattering oil and deafening noise. Ten miles. Twenty miles. Thirty. Yet on the long curves where the jungle was chopped clear, I could see Number Two walloping along behind us in a blur of fireglow and iron.

Red holes in the night. The firefly twinkle of popping guns.

"Hurry!" the woman came out of a trance and screamed at me. "Faster! They're gaining on us!"

We couldn't go any faster. Number One would have blown to pieces if we had tried it. The throttle was down to the last notch.

We came to a place where the track was overshadowed by tall palms. I poked my head from the window in terror, trying to see, and the wind almost blasted my face away. Downhill at sixty, and we seemed to be rocketing in mid air, ripping through Stygian black on a thundering firebrand. You think that engine wasn't rocking?

"Faster! Faster!—They're gaining!" came the scream.

We were pounding on an upgrade. Doc turned from the steam indicator, threw down his shovel. Head to foot, he was as black as tar, streaming coaldust and grease.

"I ought to unhook that banana car . . . "

"No, no!" I shrieked. "It would kill the lot of them . . . "

"They're almost up to us!—I'll fix those consumptive, paretic cretins!"

He scrambled out of the cab, across the coal bins and up to the tender's deck; he stooped low and ran to the box car. Under the braking wheel there was a little door in the car's square face. Doc opened the door, yanked out three bunches of green bananas.

"Help me!" he shrieked at Mrs. Bonesteel.

I won't soon forget the woman's answer, her voice lifted above the bellow of the engine.

"Don't interrupt!" she cried. "I'm *concnetrating*! I'm trying to communicate with Bonesteel."

Doc must have gone crazy. Clutching those banana stems in his arms, he crawled to the top of the box car, wormed his way aft, and sat there in the smoke and wind and moonlight, peeling bananas—*peeling green bananas*. There was Number Two's headlight, closing in behind like a huge white eye—and the little fat man ripping skins from the fruit. Crazy?—Like a fox.

I could have yelled. He was throwing those skinned bananas on the track! Three bunches, and three bunches more. White meat and green skins scattered across the rails in the vacuum behind us. I could hear the wild, crescendo whine of Number Two's skidding drivewheels, the blast of that engine's exhaust, the bawl of rage from its train crew. There was Doc, squatting atop the box car, tossing bananas like some outlandish, gamin sparrow scattering crumbs from a roof. I won't forget that sight. Or the roaring of the baffled locomotive behind us. You know the sound? The blast of a freight engine struggling on greasy rails, trying to pull a heavy train, drivers spinning?

We pulled away, and the headlight faded, the din died in our rear. Twenty miles more, cutting the grooves across Honduras, eating the miles in the pitch black of the jungle. Didn't we get away from that other train? But tearing a tunnel down the night, alone this way, with Doc stoking the fire and the woman standing over the white mummy of Big Dan on the tender, was almost worse. Every mile it was worse. Over my shoulder I could see her standing there, a black image above the white, making passes with her hands and her lips going.

"We'll make the boat!" Doc hollered. "Look at the mileage. Only fifteen more to go."

BUT WE HAD more than that to go. We crashed the night to shatters through a narrow ravine, started to blast around a sweeping curve, and I heard a sound that got me by the throat. *Whooo-whooo-whooooee!* That was the train behind us. They'd sanded the track, cleared the garbage and were coming ahead full steam. And that wasn't the third of it. My old Number One took the curve like an iron airplane, stormed out onto a straight stretch,

and smack to the middle of hell. I mean *hell*.

"Look!" Doc's screech came out of his mouth like the wail of a jackal.

But I didn't have to look. I could see, all right. You could see for miles. As bright as day, and the sky painted crimson as dawn and hot as tropical noon. Only it wasn't day. Before I could yank the lever, that runaway engine shot straight into the middle of Hades in a wild, blazing heat to singe your eyebrows. Burning sugar; the cane, as far as your eye could see, was on fire. Flame licking and leaping and billowing in all directions, and the track going straight through the middle of it—and we were on the track! And at that same desperate minute a little valve snapped above the firebox; something hacked a cough in the engine's middle; and the wheels hammered to a stop.

"Don't back up!" Doc squalled.

"They're coming after us!" the woman shrieked. "Go ahead!"

"We can't go at *all*!" I screeched. "It's broken *down*!"

And with one voice they screamed, "Oh, my God! If Big Dan was only here!"

Can you see us, stalled in the heart of that crimson, flaming field, with the tracks as red as electric wires ahead and behind; fire capering across the road bed and blue flames licking along the ties? Can you smell the burning sugar and hear the crackling blaze-roar and the echo of those two simultaneous screams?

But, then, can you see what I saw? The white-wrapped body of the big engineer stretched at the woman's feet! One outflung arm and green hand—all clear as day in the volcanic brilliance of the cane fires.

That dead arm began to move! I tell you, I saw it move across the sooty iron deck and lift green fingers to fumble across the sheet-swathed face. I wanted to yell, but my throat tied itself in a granny knot. I couldn't gasp a sound. Fire shouted around the stalled train, some distance away sounded the phantom echo of a locomotive whistle; and in the red glare of nightmare the white, mummy figure moved and slowly raised its head. Slowly the spectral figure sat upright. The fingers pulled the shroud away; and Big Dan Bonesteel sat staring, his forehead the color of dying grass, his face enameled scarlet, his eyes batted wide in his head.

"Where am I? Voices—I heard voices!" The wizardish cry strangled into a shout. "What's wrong with that engine? . . ."

"I've done it!" Mrs. Bonesteel screamed. "I've raised the dead!"

I DON'T KNOW what Doc and I were doing. I know that sepulchral being atop the tender soared to its feet, whipped off the sheet and tossed it into the coal bin; then it came springing for the cab to knock me flat on the floor with a green hand. I could see that terrible hand snatch a hammer from under the driver's seat, pound and claw at the broken valve above the firebox.

The hammer flew through the window. The green hand grabbed the throttle. The engine belched a roar, sprang forward on the track. Embers and flame walls shot past the cab on either side, as that impossible express train went slamming straight through the heart of the roaring field, shaking and rocking and thundering.

A last rush of red heat, and we were whistling through cool dark, banging across the switches on the outskirts of Puerto Paloma, past a railroad shed where dim men yelled, then out on a dock where the calm white wall of a fruit boat loomed above the tracks. Doc was yelling and the woman was yelling. Big Dan was sitting on the seat in the cab window, clutching the throttle in his pea-green hands. I lay on the floor, stiff as a board.

But don't as I did for weeks after, go peeking under your bed every night and starting with a whinney every time you hear a train whistle echoing under the moon. It was the sort of thing that could have happened only in Honduras. Only in Honduras would an engineer race his train through a field of burning sugar to scare into convulsions the police, who'd fired the cane. I won't forget the howls of those terrified soldiers on the dock, or the sight of the Honduran general who vanished up the wharf, smaller and smaller, like a clown cop in a slapstick movie. Only in Honduras would a fruit boat lower a gangway down its calm white wall, ship's officers shouting and funnel blowing.

The woman in black sprinted across the tracks with the fat little doctor and an engineer with green hands chasing after; and Mrs. Bonesteel made a picture running for that gangway. Don't ever think she didn't. Halfway up the gangplank she halted, whirling on the pair who had tried to catch her.

"Don't try to stop me!" The voice bursting from that sooty face would have halted an army. "I'm going to England. — I shall take my story to the world!" One black finger pointed at the moon. "My life belongs to those gone Beyond. I have raised the dead!"

The voice of her husband would have raised the dead, I promise you.

"Wait!" he screeched. "My sheet! I threw it in the coal car. Where's my *sheet*?"

Mrs. Bonesteel was at the high rail. "I threw it into that burning field, you fool!" she screamed through cupped palms. "Contagious!"

Plop! The engineer went down. I was crawling from the cab, and I saw him fall. The white ship slid along the wharf, and Mrs. Bonesteel stood at the rail, stark and black, moonshine making cold satellites of the glasses pinched at her nose, her finger fixed pointing at the sky.

NO MAN was there to see us carry the body off that wharf. When we staggered into the banana office I wanted a good big drink. I smashed the neck from a bottle, and poured brown whiskey through Big Dan's teeth. Then I slopped the rest of it through my own.

The engineer sat upright on the floor the next moment, smiling his rueful smile.

"Gotta do something to get this green house paint off my hands," he told us dolefully.

"Too bad it wasn't Paris green!" Doc Foster snapped, pacing the room. "Paris green in the pit of that woman's neurotic stomach. — Throwin' the sheet away like that!"

"And with all that silver wrapped up in the feet of that shroud!" the incredible engineer groaned. "Say, I thought I *would* die when I shoveled up those silver beads at the bottom of that well. Musta been worth a fortune. — Maybe we should of told her, Doc, instead of playin' possum an' having her think I was dead, and me tryin' to sneak off on the boat as a corpse. Th' fortune's gone, all right, but — " the rueful smile broadened to an urching grin — "I reckon the wife is, too. — Gee, give me a hand, will you, Jones, an' help me off'n this floor?"

"I wouldn't touch either of you!" I let them have it. "You're contagious!"

Only in Honduras, I repeat, could the thing have happened. Those scoundrels!—And on the strength of his supernatural return from the dead, Big Dan got the religious element behind him and made him vice president at the next election! Doc Foster became secretary of the Honduran army, and the first job *he* did was to fire one Guiterre Miguel Wenceslao Saavedra.

Mrs. Bonesteel now calls herself by another name and coins a fortune as the latest fad in Europe. I spent a year hunting that treasure in that burned-out cane field, but I didn't find it.

The days are too bright in Honduras; the nights are too dark.



WIDE, WIDE WORLD

As this issue goes to press, letters and postcards are still coming in from you, the readers, telling us what you thought of our first issue. So rather than close the polls now, we will wait until next time to let you know how the consensus rated our initial efforts.

"I have just finished reading Issue No. 1 of *WORLD-WIDE ADVENTURE*," writes Lawrence E. Orin, "and I enjoyed it very much. The stories were a welcome change from the sex-oriented, bedroom-type heroes that seem to be all you can find in most men's magazines. A little sex is fine, when it fits into the plot of the tale; but when you can't find the steak for the catsup, who enjoys it? . . . I liked all the stories in the Winter 1967/68 issue, but of course I thought some were better than others. I'm enclosing the Reader's Preference Coupon at the back of the magazine."

Many thanks, Mr. Orin—and you've stated the point exactly, we feel, both on the matter of sex and/or erotism in adventure stories and the matter of enjoying all of our contents. We want to see if we can bring you more of the sort of stories that you liked most—that "you" is plural, although we hope it will be individual in any particular reader's case. We have a chance of doing that if others do as you did—that "you" is singular—rate them all in order of preference.

"While I've enjoyed your revivals of the old pulp weird and science fiction tales," writes P. J. Andrews, "I wouldn't have thought that there was anything worth reviving in the general 'action' magazines. Well, I see how wrong I was—the old *ARGOSY* and others had some first class stories, and they weren't just slam-bang stuff, either. I was particularly taken by *Monsieur Murder* and *The Black Pearl*, both full of atmosphere and suspense. Hope you can make the new venture a regular."

One request, which came from several of you, not only sounds reasonable, but is something which we can fulfill right now. A number of you are collectors of the old pulp magazines, and would like to know the original source of our stories. We will let you know in this department henceforth; and right now, we'll give you the data on the first issue and on this present one.

From *ARGOSY: Bayou Trap*, by Hapsburg Liebe and *Fighter's Socks*, by Walter Hopper Martin, from the issue of June 3, 1933; *Monsieur Murder*, by Theodore Roscoe and *The Black Pearl*, by Paul Annixter, from the July 15, 1933 issue; *The Atoll of Flaming Men*, by Ralph R. Perry from the October 19, 1935 issue; *Thunder Deck*, by R. V. Gery from the issue of October 26, 1935. The magazines were copyright 1933, 1933, 1935 respectively by the Frank A. Munsey Company; there is no record of separate renewal on these stories.

From *ACE-HIGH MAGAZINE: Spurs in the Dust* by George Rosenberg and *The Loose-Lead Dog*, by Philip Cole are from the Second March 1928 number; they were copyright 1928 by Ace-High Magazine, and there is no record of separate renewal.

In the present issue, from *ARGOSY: Graveyard Limited*, by Theodore Roscoe, is from the December 1933, issue; *A Nickel's Worth Of Life*, by James H. S. Moynahan from the November 9, 1935 issue; and *The Red Scorpion*, by Anthony M. Rud is from the October 26, 1935 issue. These issues were copyright 1933, 1935, and 1935 by the Frank A. Munsey Company; there is no record of separate renewal.

From *ACE-HIGH MAGAZINE: The Star That Finally Stuck*, by Ralph L. Cunningham, appeared in the Second March 1928 number and was copyright 1928 by Ace-High Magazine; no separate renewal of copyright.

The Treasure in the Forest, by H. G. Wells is from the collection, *The Stolen Bacillus and Other Incidents*; *On The City Wall*, by Rudyard Kipling, is from the collection, *Soldiers Three*.

At the time we write this, Theodore Roscoe's novelet of the Foreign Legion, *Monsieur Murder* has a substantial lead over the rest of the stories in the issue, according to your votes. However, we have often found in the past that a story may hold the lead in the readers' votes right up to the last week of the balloting, and then give place to another contender.

RAWL

MASTERPIECES OF MYSTERY

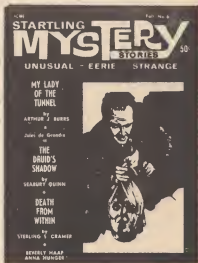
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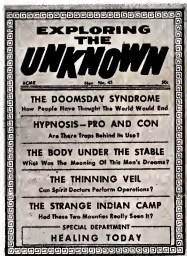
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